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30 September 2008

Mr G Phillips  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Phillips

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT (Information Communication Technology)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 - 23 of September to look at work in ICT.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of ICT, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of assessment.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included discussions with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and joint observations of five part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is good and standards are broadly average.

- Students make good progress from a low starting point and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is contributing to rising standards particularly in music and modern foreign languages. However, there are missed opportunities of reinforcing literacy skills in ICT based lessons.
- Students with learning difficulties and disabilities progress well in their ICT because they receive good support from well trained and skilled teaching assistants.

- Students for whom English is an additional language and who are in the early stages of speaking English, also make good progress because they benefit from teaching in their own language and working with other students who speak the same first language.
- The school tracks the progress made by students very well and this helps to identify those in need of additional support. However, students are not assessed on what they know and can do in ICT when they join the school and this at times delays the progress of the small number who arrive with a high level of ICT skill and capabilities.
- Students believe that the use of ICT helps to make learning more enjoyable and interesting. They say that it helps them to improve their work in other subjects because they can review, edit and refine their work.

### Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have a particularly good rapport with students and work hard to plan lessons, which are purposeful and interesting.
- Teachers make good use of additional adults to ensure that the most vulnerable students are fully included and progress as well as their peers.
- There is good access to ICT to support learning during, as well as outside, of lessons. This along with the good quality of teaching contributes to students' positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards (IWB) to demonstrate new concepts and learning and to liberate them to interact more freely and frequently with their class. A good example was seen in Year 11. The introductory part of this lesson included examples of different types of animation being shown on the IWB with the teacher encouraging students to consider how they could develop what they already knew about filming and the use of stills to produce an animation about road safety.
- Students appreciate the use of high quality visual images including the use of film and DVDs because they believe this helps to make learning easy and more engaging.
- In most lessons, students are encouraged to work collaboratively on real world situations and use technology to best effect. A good example was seen with students in Year 9 who had made contact by telephone with a representative from one of the political parties to enquire about the contents of their manifesto and what they would do to help improve the environment.

### Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the ICT curriculum is good.

- The provision and use of ICT are integral to what the school is able to offer with its specialism in technology.

- Students believe they receive a good education and that the ICT curriculum and its use in the vast majority of subjects is very good.
- The school is very well resourced with a broad range of hardware and software.
- The programme of work and courses on offer are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure the curriculum for ICT meets the needs and interest of learners.
- Students benefit from project days dedicated to aspects of the curriculum, which may not otherwise be covered sufficiently well. This has enabled the school for example to make good provision for teaching students about control technology.
- Staff speak with confidence about how ICT is used across the curriculum and how it contributes to their planning and preparation as well as to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The application of ICT across the curriculum is becoming well embedded.
- Curriculum provision includes units of work about internet safety and these ensure that students know how to keep themselves safe.

### Leadership and management of ICT

The quality of leadership and management are good. Some aspects, such as ensuring high quality technical support and the quality of training and guidance for staff are outstanding.

- The leadership and management of ICT are appropriately focused on raising standards. Consequently, action planning for the subject includes good references to how students are intended to benefit and success criteria are realistic and measurable.
- There is clear vision for ICT, which is shared and understood by staff, governors and students.
- The developments in ICT are reinforced by the school's focus on recommendations made by the Secondary National Strategy.
- The head of department for ICT has an accurate view of the strengths and areas, which could be improved. The views of students are sought and their work is scrutinized to help inform future priorities.
- Lessons are observed and these provide the school with a clear view of what could be even better; however, observations in ICT do not always record how teaching is impacting on learning.

### Use of Assessment

Use of assessment in ICT is good.

- Staff make effective use of end of unit assessment to track and monitor students' progress. These assessments also provide valuable information to the head of department about how well the programme of work is being covered.
- All staff have access to information about students' levels in ICT. This provides a helpful insight about students' capability when using ICT as a tool in other subjects.

- Students value the feedback they receive from their teachers as this helps them to know how to improve.
- The assessment of work after completion is good, but the use of assessment to support and enhance learning during lessons is at times limited. This is closely linked to missed opportunities for students to discuss their work and ideas before responding to their teachers' questions. In some cases, this results in some students who are less articulate or less confident not contributing as much as they might.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- assessing what students know and can do in ICT when they join the school, so that the most capable receive good levels of challenge as soon as possible, particularly in Year 7
- embedding assessment strategies for use during lessons and ensuring lessons include sufficient opportunities for students to discuss and share ideas before responding to teachers' questions.

The school has correctly identified the need to develop its use of its virtual learning environment to further support students with their work and increase parents' level of engagement with their children's learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
Her Majesty's Inspector