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Mrs S Godden
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Dear Mrs Godden

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19-20 November 2008 to look at work in ICT.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, 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 interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory. Standards reached at the end of each key stage are broadly in line with national standards.

- The school uses the Key Stage 2 English and mathematics test results along with CATs data to establish the baseline for ICT. This shows students enter the school with standards that are broadly in line with the national average.
- Achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and has remained broadly the same in the past two years.
- In Key Stage 4 students complete an accredited ICT course and make satisfactory progress. They reach standards broadly in line with the national average.

- The un-validated Key Stage 4 results for 2008 show an improvement on the results for 2007. In addition the school's tracking data shows that progress is better this year than for last year too.
- Students behave well in ICT lessons and relationships in the classroom are very positive.
- The progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because teaching assistants work well with students and teachers.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are good.

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen ranged from outstanding to satisfactory and was good overall.
- There have been many changes to the staff teaching ICT in the recent past and a significant investment in training. This has resulted in better teaching and learning and is contributing significantly to improvements in progress seen in ICT, particularly in Key Stage 4. Standards still remain satisfactory but are quickly rising because students are more motivated and able to work independently. For example in an outstanding ICT lesson in Year 10 students were using graphics software to design a logo to a very high standard. Indeed some of the students were achieving professional results and were very proud of their work.
- Access to equipment is good, for example, in the sixth form students have access to laptop computers for self directed study. The use of ICT across the school is motivating students and contributing to better teaching and learning.
- The analysis of students' work and lesson observations show many examples of activities where students are given the freedom and independence to apply ICT creatively. For example the use of mind mapping software in Geology very effectively motivated students in Year 11.
- Lessons were well-planned. Teachers knew the students' abilities and adapted the lessons to ensure that students made good progress. The recent improvements in assessment and guidance have enabled teachers to increase the amount of independent learning in lessons whilst still ensuring students are clear about what to do.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is inadequate.

- Not all aspects of the ICT National Curriculum are fully covered in Key Stage 3 and 4. Although students do have some access to control and data logging activities this does not fully meet requirements and progress is not assessed.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is not co-ordinated sufficiently well and assessment data from across the curriculum is not shared. Improved coordination is required to ensure that curriculum areas across the school

are better able to develop students ICT capability by building on the teaching and learning from other areas.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has improved recently and is providing better opportunities for students to work independently. Further changes are being planned to adapted lessons further to more appropriately match all the students' needs.
- Recent changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 are having a beneficial impact on results. Tracking data shows that students are making better progress than before.
- Developments of the school Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) are at an early stage. Students do not currently have access to an adequate range of on-line resources to enable them to extend their learning out of lessons.
- You have recognised these issues and plans are now in place to ensure that all students will receive their statutory entitlement and have access to improved on-line resources.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are good.

- The strategic leadership and management of ICT are good. The very new ICT leader has made a very effective start in tackling the main development issues for ICT at the school. However developments are at an early stage and require further time to impact fully on outcomes for students.
- A detailed whole school development plan is in place. The ICT department development plan is up to date and relates well to whole school aims. Both plans have clear targets and deadlines for achievement.
- The leader for ICT tracks progress made by students in ICT. Students who are identified as underachieving are quickly identified and appropriate support is put in place to help them regain lost ground.
- An established audit identifies the ICT training needs of all staff across the school. Training courses are organised, sometimes with external support, to improve staff ICT capability. These are well received and have contributed to better staff ICT capability.
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored frequently by school leaders leading to improved teaching and learning.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is satisfactory.

- Systems for recording and assessing students' progress and attainment in ICT are developing well. Teachers are accurately assessing the students' attainment and progress towards target grades is reviewed frequently with students. There is an effective 'traffic light' system which alerts teachers to any potential underperformance by students.
- At Key Stage 4 students are clear about their present level of achievement. Feedback from teachers is good and enables them to judge how well they

are doing compared to their target grades. Marking includes sufficient comments on what to do to improve.

- At Key Stage 3 assessment is satisfactory. Students do know what level they are working at but feedback on how to improve is variable. This is because feedback to students at Key Stage 3 is sometimes too brief and focuses on task completion rather than what they need to do to improve their ICT capability.
- Assessment information on the use of ICT made by students across the whole curriculum is not available to the ICT department. This means that assessments do not adequately take in to account progress made in ICT across the rest of the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs and interests of all the students and covers all required aspects of the National Curriculum
- developing the reliability and frequency of ICT assessment from across the whole curriculum to ensure that ICT levels are more secure
- developing the co-ordination of ICT delivery across the school to ensure that all subject areas take in to account, and are aware of, the progress made by students in other areas
- developing the VLE to provide resources for students to enable them to become independent learners.

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

Clifford Mainey
Additional Inspector