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Mr P Gillis  
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Dear Mr Gillis

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

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 26-27 January 2009 to look at work in ICT and ML.

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.

### Information and communication technology

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 six part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be inadequate.

### Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is inadequate. Standards are above average for those students who pursue an ICT qualification.

- Students enter the school with ICT standards which are broadly in line with the national average. The communication and presenting information standards are higher than those the students have in handling data, particularly with respect to databases.

- By the end of Key Stage 3 students reach standards which are above the national average. This means that during Key Stage 3 students make good progress in ICT.
- However at Key Stage 4 the progress students make depends on the options they decide to take. Students studying ICT GCSE reach standards which are significantly above those reached nationally. Given their starting points these students make good progress. Students who study the diploma in digital applications (DiDa) ICT course reach standards which are above average. This means that they make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 with respect to the aspects covered in the course. Almost one in five students do not study ICT at Key Stage 4 at all. These students do not receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum and make inadequate progress. This means that the majority of students at Key Stage 4 do not receive their statutory entitlement to the ICT National Curriculum and make inadequate progress with respect to the aspects they do not study. This inadequate progress by the majority of students at Key Stage 4 means that achievement overall is inadequate.
- In the sixth form a small number of students study ICT. These students make good progress given their starting points and the standards they reach at the end of their course.
- Students are taught how to stay safe on the internet and when using new technologies through specific lessons, assemblies and personal, social and health education. The students spoken to were fully aware of dangers of new technologies and how they could stay safe.
- Students are almost always well behaved in lessons when they are using ICT. They are prepared to help each other and support each other's learning. However in the weaker lessons students were less well behaved. This was because the activities they were completing did not meet their needs and interests.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. They have good access to ICT, including, for a small number of students access to handheld technology. These students make the same progress as their peers.

### Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning of ICT is satisfactory.

- The lessons seen ranged from good to inadequate. In the majority of lessons students made no better than satisfactory progress. This was because these lessons did not meet the all needs and interests of the students. This meant that for some students the tasks were too difficult and for others they were too easy. Some students, when they had finished the tasks, took the opportunity to engage in low level disruption and distracted other students from learning.
- In some of the weaker lessons the pace of the lesson was slow and the resources used did not support the students' learning.
- In all lessons the learning objectives were shared with the students. In the better lessons students' learning was supported with good

resources which were relevant to the students and closely linked to the examination criteria.

- Good questioning was a feature of the good lessons. The questioning was clear, challenged the students to think and developed their knowledge and understanding.
- Laptops were used well in a mathematics lesson. The use of laptops motivated the students and enabled them to quickly construct graphs and develop their evaluation skills.
- Students in the sixth form are very appreciative of the amount of time members of staff are prepared to give them both in lessons and outside lessons.

### Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum for ICT is inadequate.

- At Key Stage 4 almost one in five students do not receive their statutory entitlement to the ICT National Curriculum. This means a significant minority of students receive an unbalanced, uncoordinated and inconsistent experience resulting in this group making minimal progression in their ability to use ICT.
- Although some Key Stage 4 students do complete ICT work across the curriculum this work is not assessed using ICT criteria. The assessment of the work is not fed back to the ICT department. This means that the department has an incomplete view of the work the students are doing.
- At Key Stage 3 the department is developing the curriculum to make it more interesting and relevant to the students. The work the students are doing is developing their independent learning skills. It is also enabling the students to peer and self assess their work. This means they are more aware of what they need to do to improve their work.
- In the sixth form the course offered is appropriate and meet the needs and interests of the small number of students who opt for it.

### Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are inadequate.

- You were informed by the Local Authority ICT advisor in March 2008 that the curriculum was inadequate. Despite this knowledge, at the time of this inspection, the necessary changes have not been made to ensure that all students receive their statutory entitlement to the ICT National Curriculum.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum was mapped in 2007. However the mapping has not been updated in line with the new ICT National Curriculum which was statutory from September 2008.
- There is no systematic evaluation of the use of ICT across the curriculum and its impact on outcomes for students despite the fact that this is how almost one in five students receives their ICT provision at Key Stage 4.

- The ICT work the students complete across the school is not monitored, tracked, assessed or evaluated.
- The school is not meeting the expectation that students who do not follow an accredited ICT course at Key Stage 4 receive a separate ICT report which states what progress they are making in ICT.
- The four principles of best value: challenge, compare, consult and competition are adhered to. This means the resources provided, particularly in design technology have had a positive impact on the results in the subject. The governors are involved in the purchasing of ICT equipment through the finance committee.
- All members of staff can be involved in continuous professional development with respect to ICT. They are able to opt for a range of ICT courses depending on their needs and interests.
- The department regularly reviews the work it is doing. The strengths and areas for development from these reviews are highlighted in the departmental self evaluation. The department has a development plan and additional action plans in place, however some of the actions, particularly in the development plan are not time related. Also the actions do not specifically link to outcomes for students.
- The departmental handbook is comprehensive. It clearly sets out the aims and objectives for the department and policies to enable these to happen.
- The significant deficiencies in key areas of ICT provision and outcomes for students mean that leadership and management are inadequate. The leadership and management have recently recognised many of the deficiencies in the provision and the outcomes for students and plans are being made to rectify them.

### Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is inadequate.

- At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form staff provide the students with constructive comments which enable the students to improve their work. Students are aware of what they need to do to improve their work, what standard they are at and their target grades.
- The assessment of ICT work in Key Stage 3 is considerably weaker than at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Most students at Key Stage 3 know the level they are working at and what their target levels are, however a significant number of students do not. The comments do not always explain what the student has done well, what they need to do to improve and how they can improve their work with reference to the level they are at and the level they need to reach. This has been acknowledged by the department and strategies are in place to improve it. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these strategies.
- The assessment of the ICT work of students at Key Stage 4 who are not following an accredited ICT course is non-existent. These students do not have their ICT work assessed; they do not know what standard they are reaching, how to improve their work and what standard they should be achieving. They are also unaware of their progress. One

student stated, when asked what progress s/he was making 'we do not know that we have made progress'.

- The ICT work completed by students across the curriculum is not fed back to the ICT department. This means that the ICT department is unaware of the work which the students are doing, the standards they are reaching and the progress made. This means the ICT department has an inaccurate view of students' outcomes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all students make at least satisfactory progress in ICT at Key Stage 4
- developing teaching and learning by ensuring that activities are well matched to students' needs and interests.
- ensuring that all students receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum
- improving assessment, monitoring of progress and reporting to parents.

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

### Modern languages

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with three groups of students, staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML was judged to be satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are average.

- Standards at Key Stage 3 are broadly average. In 2008, results indicate that 49% of students achieved the expected Level 5 in National Curriculum teacher assessments in French. Attainment at Level 6 was below average. The attainment of girls is significantly higher than that of boys.
- Although very few students continue with ML in Key Stage 4, standards at GCSE level are consistently very good. In 2008, all students achieved A\*-C grades and two-thirds achieved an A\*-A grade. No students currently study a language in the sixth form.
- Observations of lessons and scrutiny of students' work show that the progress made by students is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3. Some recent prolonged discontinuity in staffing has slowed the rate of learning for a number of classes. Students in Key Stage 4 make good progress due to effective teaching.
- Students' writing is developing well. Most have good opportunities in class and in homework to write sentences in French and to complete some extended writing in paragraphs.

- Satisfactory opportunities exist for students to listen to native speakers. In a good Year 7 lesson, the interactive whiteboard was well used to enable learners to hear how new vocabulary was pronounced.
- Reading skills are developing well but students' skills are weakest in speaking. Many are reluctant to speak French despite much good encouragement.
- Students' intercultural understanding is good. They know the major countries where French is spoken in Europe and in the wider world; the regions of France and key tourist sites in Paris. They also know about other aspects of French culture, such as food and viticulture and the different school system.
- Most students enjoy learning French. They have a good understanding of why it is important to learn a language and of how it can contribute to their future economic well-being. They cited how languages could be used in careers in the airline industry, translating, business and at the United Nations.
- Most students are well behaved in lessons and generally listen well to instructions. Most work well together when asked to do so.

### Quality of teaching and learning in ML

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with good features.

- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Where it was at its best, teaching was lively, characterised by a good pace of learning and ensured that most students were appropriately challenged. Learning objectives are routinely shared with students. However, in some lessons the pace of learning was slower and too much time was spent on some activities. This caused the attention of students to wander and some deterioration in behaviour.
- Starter activities are usually interesting. They recap prior learning and then build on this. There is good use of the target language in some lessons. Praise words are often well used. In one class of more able learners, good explanations for a learning task were given in French.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good as is pronunciation. In some lessons there was good teaching about language learning strategies, such as in one Year 7 lesson when pupils were reminded how words ending in 's' are pronounced.
- In all lessons observed, teachers made use of the interactive whiteboard and it was often well used to introduce new vocabulary and teach its pronunciation.
- Lessons are generally well planned, although there is scope to provide greater detail on how the most able can be challenged.
- Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are not always fully exploited to revise and embed new learning. Most students listen well in lessons and work well together and independently when asked to do so. In a good Year 11 lesson, one group of students worked industriously on computers completing listening exercises while another group practised their speaking skills in role play work.

- Most students know their targets, the levels they are working at and what they need to do to improve. There is some good use of self and peer assessment by students which helped them understand their mistakes and to learn from them. There is inconsistency in the written academic guidance pupils receive. Some guidance is very good and tells students what they need to do to improve. However, in a number of classes, marking is perfunctory and some pupils' work is unmarked.
- The two classrooms used for ML teaching have colourful and useful displays of key vocabulary and some good examples of students' work including that completed using ICT.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- French is taught in both Key Stages 3 and 4. More able linguists do not have the opportunity to study a second language. There is some limited teaching of Spanish, instead of French, to a lower ability group in Key Stage 3. The school has plans to introduce Spanish as an option in Key Stage 4.
- The time allocation for learning ML is suitable.
- French is offered as an option in Key Stage 4 but timetabling clashes have prevented some students from choosing to study it.
- Although languages are offered as an option in the sixth form, the very small numbers opting for it has meant that courses have not run.
- The school's own scheme of work is satisfactory and follows the National Curriculum guidelines but is not imaginative in its content. There are appropriate plans to revise it.
- Learning is supported by an appropriate amount of homework and by some revision classes for Year 11 students.
- There are some opportunities for enrichment. An annual trip to Paris takes place for students in Years 7 and 8. There are no clubs or other activities whereby students can learn about other languages and cultures.
- Few opportunities exist for students to read authentic materials for enjoyment. The school's resource centre has few books in French or about France.

### Leadership and management of ML

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good features.

- In the unavoidable absence of the subject leader, the ML department is managed by a member of the senior leadership team. Meetings of the departmental team are infrequent.
- You are supportive of ML and of plans to introduce Spanish into Key Stage 4.
- Good steps have been taken to develop academic guidance although these are applied inconsistently. In some classes, learners are not as effectively supported as in others.

- The views of students on languages have been considered informally, and this has influenced plans to introduce Spanish at Key Stage 4.
- ICT has been enthusiastically embraced by the department and staff have attended training. This has resulted in a greater use of ICT in lessons making them more interesting and stimulating.
- A number of useful steps have been taken to promote ML at Key Stage 4: a letter has been sent to parents explaining their value; advice has been given to students about study options; and the local Business and Learning Partnership is invited annually to speak to students about the advantages of learning a language. These have contributed to the modest rise in the numbers studying ML at Key Stage 4. The school has also begun to liaise more closely with the local authority on this, and other issues.
- The department's self-evaluation is broadly accurate but is dated in some sections. There are some weaknesses in key documentation; the departmental handbook offers little guidance on procedures to temporary teachers.
- The departmental action plan is satisfactory. It indicates a number of priorities, such as the revision of schemes of work, but does not spell out in enough detail how underachievement, such as that of boys in Key Stage 3, will be tackled or how engagement in ML at Key Stage 4 can be addressed.
- The progress of students is tracked using the whole school data system. However, information identifying underachievement is not yet fully exploited to systematically tackle this and raise standards.
- Some links have been developed with other local schools. An example of this is discussions about plans to introduce additional accreditation for students at the end of Key Stage 3.
- Liaison with local primary schools is at an early stage of development.

How close the school is to reaching the benchmarks for language take-up in Key Stage 4

- The take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 is well below the benchmark of 50% set by the Secretary of State in 2006. In 2008, some 5% students studied a language in Year 11
- The general trend is upward. Currently, 7.3% of students in Year 10 learn a language and in Year 11 the figure is higher at 14%.
- The school's plans to introduce Spanish in Key Stage 4 are intended to increase the take-up of languages and provide opportunities for students to study two languages.

How well is ICT used by teachers and students to improve language learning?

This is good.

- ICT was well used in all lessons observed, reflecting the department's commitment to its use. It is used well to introduce and consolidate new



concepts and vocabulary, and to make learning interesting and stimulating.

- Students in Key Stage 3 have regularly access to the school's computer suites for ML lessons. There are opportunities for students to use ICT to draft and redraft texts but not all students have ICT folders to store their work in.
- Students in Key Stage 4 use ICT to design posters in French and to practise individual listening skills. It contributes well to the good progress which they make.
- ICT is particularly well used to enable students to hear French spoken by native speakers and to see it modelled by older students. In one lesson, a class of more able Year 9 students were shown a video of two Key Stage 4 students speaking in French in order to encourage them in speaking.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring consistency in teaching and departmental procedures so that all pupils make good progress
- increasing engagement at Key Stage 4 including embedding opportunities for students to study more than one language
- raising standards at Key Stage 3, particularly for boys and the more able
- strengthening departmental action planning to include clear and detailed steps on how attainment will be raised and how provision in ML at Key Stage 4 will be improved.

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

Tanya Harber Stuart  
Her Majesty's Inspector