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Mr M Feehan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Feehan

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 24-25 February 2009 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 three lessons.

King Harold School is a national challenge school because the percentage of students who achieved five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics was below 30% in 2007. The school is supported through the national leadership in education (NLE) programme. This means that the school is working in close partnership with the Kemnal Trust. The partnership came into effect in 2008 because the GCSE results in 2008 did not rise above 30%.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is inadequate. Standards are below average.

- Students enter the school with standards which are broadly in line with the national average.

- By the end of Key Stage 3 students reach standards which are well below the national average. In particular a much smaller percentage of students reach the higher levels than students nationally. Therefore during Key Stage 3 students make inadequate progress.
- In 2008 the percentage of students who achieved a good ICT GCSE grade was significantly below the national average and the students made inadequate progress. This inadequate progress was acknowledged and alternative accredited courses are now in place for some students at Key Stage 4.
- Students who are studying the newly introduced accredited ICT courses at Key Stage 4 are, according to the data presented, making satisfactory progress. However not all of these students study all the elements of the ICT National Curriculum and with respect to the elements they do not study they make inadequate progress.
- The students who study ICT for one hour a week during Key Stage 4 make inadequate progress and reach standards which are well below the national average. This is partly because they do not cover the statutory ICT National Curriculum.
- You ensure that students are kept safe when using new technologies. There is a module on how to stay safe in the personal, social and health education programme. You also invite the police in to talk to the students during assemblies. Parents are also involved and you have run courses for parents on how they can keep their children safe. Students are aware of need to stay safe and ensure they do so.
- You are beginning to use ICT to track and monitor the progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). However at the present time the majority of these students are making inadequate progress in ICT.
- The use of new technologies has had a positive impact on both behaviour and attendance. Since the introduction of text messaging and e-mailing parents about their child's absence the number of persistently absent students has reduced considerably. Behaviour is now tracked through the ICT system and the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour has declined notably.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

- In many lessons the pace of learning is too slow, particularly in Key Stage 3. This means that the students make inadequate progress.
- Lessons often lack challenge. Students say that they are repeating many of the skills which they learnt prior to arriving at King Harold and that lessons do not allow them to develop their ICT capability.
- Most lessons are not based on thorough, accurate and frequent assessment. This means that often all the students are asked to complete the same work. Many of them find this work too easy and they engage in low level disruptive behaviour. This then slows the pace of the lesson and further limits the amount of progress the students make.
- In the better lessons assessment is used appropriately to ensure that students make satisfactory progress. In these lessons the

demonstrations of how to do the work are clear and students understand what they have to do. These lessons are also characterised by students utilising a variety of activities which engages them.

- The digital art GCSE allows the students to apply their ICT knowledge and understanding and also develop their ICT capability. In these lessons the students are focused on the work they have to complete and the effective tracking satisfactorily supports their learning.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is inadequate.

- At Key Stage 3 students have a one hour ICT lesson a week. However the course provided does not ensure that the students receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum. The lack of robust data on students' skills and capabilities when they enter the school means that the work often repeats that which they have completed prior to Year 7.
- All students at Key Stage 4 study ICT for one hour a week. However the work the students are covering does not cover all the aspects of the statutory ICT National Curriculum.
- You have recognised these issues and are in the process of modifying the curriculum to ensure it meet the needs and interests of the students.
- Some students are able to take a qualification to show that they are able to use an interactive whiteboard. This motivates these students and extends their ICT capability.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are inadequate.

- Since the support from the NLE programme started major changes have happened in terms of ICT infrastructure. All classrooms now have an interactive whiteboard and the new network means that all staff now have access to students' data. The ICT network is now reliable. Much technical support is available which means that staff are more prepared to use ICT in their lessons. Staff appreciate the new network stating that it has 'brought us into the 21st century'. Students also commented positively about the new system and how it is effectively supporting their learning.
- Alongside the new hardware staff have had ICT training. This has involved training all staffing the use of interactive whiteboards and through links with the NLE, to develop teaching and learning using ICT.
- Learning support assistants have been provided with ICT training, this means that they are able to maintain the electronic records for the LDD students.
- Although these changes have had an impact on improving the ICT provision their impact on improving ICT outcomes for students is limited.
- The strategic leadership and management now have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of ICT. However despite this the

operational leadership of ICT is inadequate. It has not ensured that the students have received their statutory entitlement to the ICT curriculum. Nor has it ensured that the students are able to make progress in terms of their ICT capability during their time at the school. The inadequate assessment and weaknesses in teaching and learning mean that underachievement is not identified and strategies to improve students' progress in ICT are not in place for most students.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is inadequate.

- Much of the students' work at Key Stage 3 is not marked. This means that the students do not know what level they are at, what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The lack of assessment is impacting on teaching and learning as staff do not know what students are capable of and are not planning to allow the students to make progress.
- At Key Stage 4 the work the students complete as part of their accredited ICT courses is assessed satisfactorily. This means that both staff and students know what work needs to be completed to ensure that they make satisfactory progress.
- However the ICT work completed by students at Key Stage 4 by students who study ICT but do not complete an accredited course is not assessed. This means that their progress is not tracked and is not reported to parents.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving teaching and learning so that all students make at least satisfactory progress
- ensuring that the curriculum covers all aspects of the statutory ICT National Curriculum
- developing the use of assessment to monitor and track students and eradicate inadequate progress.

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

Tanya Harber Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector