

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms V Champeney
Headteacher
Ashton Vale Primary School
Avebury Road
Ashton Vale
Bristol
BS3 2QG

Dear Ms Champeney

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 10 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 discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and joint observation of two part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory and improving. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are broadly in line with age related expectations and are rising.

- Attainment on entry to the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage is generally low.
- Pupils' progress is improving in line with the increase in teachers' own ICT skills and confidence.
- There is not always sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Nevertheless, ICT is used effectively to provide more able pupils with enrichment opportunities in several other subjects.
- ICT is making a good contribution to raising standards in English, mathematics and science.

- Pupils are particularly good at using ICT to explore information, to record and share ideas as well as to amend and improve their work, especially in writing.
- Pupils' ability to use databases and data logging equipment is less well developed.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school makes good use of relevant items of national news to highlight the importance of pupils not providing strangers with personal details. However, the school has yet to monitor formally the effectiveness of its policy about internet safety.
- Pupils are developing as independent users of ICT; this provides them with good opportunities to be creative and solve problems.
- The use of ICT as a learning tool helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities overcome physical and emotional barriers to learning.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning of ICT is good.

- Teaching and support staff have benefited from high quality training tailored to their needs. This together with the effective use of approaches advocated by national strategies is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Strengths within the lessons observed, included the good subject knowledge of teachers, effective support from additional adults, the good use of questions to help pupils recall and build on their previous learning and good explicit teaching of ICT related vocabulary.
- In a good Year 3/4 ICT lesson, the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard to display a selection of capital letters. Pupils were encouraged to come to the board to drag and drop the letters into one of two groups. The visual impact of the activity helped pupils to distinguish between the different sorts of commands that would be needed to programme a floor turtle to draw the letters. Pupils correctly identified those letters that would require the turtle to draw straight lines and make 90-degree turns.
- Links between ICT and other subjects are developing well, but these are not always made sufficiently explicit during lessons. This results in missed opportunities to maximise and reinforce learning.
- Although the quality of planning is good and includes a range of activities for pupils of different abilities, strategies to challenge the more able pupils during the introductory part of lessons are too limited.
- Some pupils would welcome the use of prompts to support them when working at the computer, especially when subsequent activities require them to recall half a dozen or more stages or steps, which are not yet familiar, or when lessons include a lot of new information.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the curriculum for ICT is satisfactory.

- You have invested in a range of hardware and software. This enables pupils to use ICT in different ways including outside the classroom. A good example is the use of digital cameras for younger children to photograph evidence of spring.
- Pupils receive their statutory entitlement for ICT and you monitor the range of work pupils undertake.
- The curriculum is clearly mapped out in a two year cycle, but there is currently no curriculum overview to highlight the natural links, which exist between ICT and other subjects.
- There is effective provision for ICT in the six areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the application of ICT is being embedded across the curriculum at Key Stage 1 and 2. However, not all curriculum leaders currently evaluate the impact of ICT on the learning in their area of responsibility.
- The school is beginning to outgrow its current programme of work. Consequently, there is not always sufficient guidance for staff about progression in skills within units of work. This is reducing the level of challenge for some of the more able pupils.
- Pupils make good use of ICT to be creative for example when composing poems, creating basic animation to accompany creative writing and when producing colourful and engaging presentations.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- There is a shared vision for ICT, which is known and embraced by staff and governors.
- The new ICT coordinator is well supported by the senior management team. This has ensured the continued annual audits of staff training needs even in a time of change.
- The role of the ICT coordinator is developing well, but she has yet to undertake lesson observations and ensure the school makes better use of data and assessment information.
- There is an action plan for ICT, but this does not focus sharply enough on the intended outcomes for learners and success criteria are not sufficiently measurable.
- The ICT coordinator has made a good start in accurately evaluating the strengths and areas in need of development within ICT.
- The ICT coordinator as well as the senior management team has worked alongside staff and contributed to their professional development. This has led to significant improvement in teaching and learning. Consequently, teachers are more prepared to take risks, which in turn is leading to an increase in creative, investigative and independent learning opportunities.
- Leaders and managers ensure that ICT is included as an important tool to support the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is having a positive impact on helping those pupils to be successful learners particularly in English and mathematics.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment in ICT is satisfactory.

- The school recognises this as an area for development and is trialling a new system to track and monitor progress. However, there is currently insufficient tracking of the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- The school determines pupils' level of skill and understanding of ICT when they arrive in Reception.
- The school does not set targets for ICT.
- All teachers track the progress pupils make and what has been achieved at the end of each unit of work. However, until recently this information was not used sufficiently well to inform subsequent planning.
- Although improving, pupils are not sufficiently involved in the assessment of their progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- tracking the progress made by different groups, set targets and ensure there is a good level of challenge for the more able pupils
- ensuring curriculum guidance highlights progression in skills within units of work
- further develop the role of the ICT coordinator to include the observation of lessons
- ensuring that documents used to help drive improvement are sharply focussed on the intended outcomes of learners, and include quantifiable targets against which progress can be measured.

We also discussed the benefits of the school developing a portfolio to exemplify standards.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector