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Dear Mr Poyser

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 30 April 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two full lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are average.

- Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. It is established through an assessment of pupils' capabilities during the first half-term they are in the school. Pupils sustain average standards as they move up through the school representing satisfactory achievement.
- Standards are better when pupils use ICT to communicate and present their ideas than they are on modelling and handling data. Standards in programming are above average.
- Pupils have excellent relationships and work very well with each other.

- Most pupils are aware of the need to keep themselves safe when online.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are good.

- Lessons are extremely well planned with pupils' learning objectives clearly identified and tasks of varying challenge devised appropriate to pupils' differing starting points. Success criteria are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and used well to help pupils evaluate how well they have done at the end of the lesson.
- The school has purchased 30 handheld gaming consoles for pupils to use in class to improve their mental arithmetic skills. Pupils have to complete 100 questions correctly as quickly as possible. They were really motivated by this activity and there was absolute silence in class whilst the challenge was undertaken. It generated huge excitement as well as improving pupils' numerical skills.
- Digital video is used widely by pupils to evaluate their own performances and in some subjects, for instance physical education, for teachers to record pupils' work and mark it later.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Pupils experience a wide variety of ICT in the Reception class where they use digital cameras, drag and drop icons on an interactive whiteboard and operate radio controlled cars. In other years there are good opportunities for pupils to communicate and present their ideas using ICT particularly in English. However, provision for pupils to use spreadsheets and databases is patchy in some years and the statutory requirement for pupils to experience data logging is not met. This is because the school does not possess the necessary sensors and probes. In Year 6 pupils learn the programming concepts of looping and conditional branching by creating their own simple computer games.
- There is a good range of after school activities involving ICT and an ICT residential experience for pupils in Years 5 and 6. During the residential pupils learn to sequence and layer a series of audio 'loops' to compose a soundtrack to a story told through an on screen slide show.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are good.

- In a relatively short space of time your deputy headteacher leading on ICT development has conducted a detailed audit of the school's provision. Her evaluation is extremely rigorous and gives the school an excellent understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

- The leadership of the school is addressing the weaknesses it has identified through a significant investment in new ICT resources and through associated training for teachers and teaching assistants. Staff subject knowledge and capability in using ICT is audited each year and the outcomes used to inform individual training needs. As a result the last two years have seen a marked increase in the use of ICT in all years and all subjects. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen sharply and the school attributes much of this to the use of ICT to improve learning. Although overall standards in ICT itself have lagged behind, they are improving. You and your deputy headteacher have had a clear impact on raising standards and there is a good capacity to continue to improve.
- You have made satisfactory use of the principles of best value when investing in ICT resources but recognise the need to have more regard to benchmarking procurement costs against those of similar schools.
- A virtual learning environment (VLE) is in place and is used well by staff and governors. You are ahead of the national timescales for establishing a VLE although the school is still considering how to make best use of it to improve learning.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is inadequate.

- Pupils are assessed on their progress against government schemes of work. This shows the school which individuals are meeting expectations or are above or below them. These assessments are collated into a spreadsheet and from this it is possible for the school to identify an approximate National Curriculum level.
- However, the school realises that it is not tracking pupils' progress in sufficient detail to be able to diagnose accurately the specific interventions that could be made to boost individual pupil's achievement. This is because the priority has been to establish effective assessment and tracking systems for English, mathematics and science first.
- The school's own evaluation of its ICT provision has identified that its current use of assessment is inadequate. Consequently it has very well advanced plans to introduce a rigorous tracking system in the autumn term of 2009.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing assessment procedures for tracking the progress of individual pupils in all aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT
- ensuring the requirements for pupils to learn to use data logging technology are met.

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

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector