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27 April 2009

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Dear Mr Stevens

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 21 April 2009 to look at work in ICT. As outlined in the 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 you, the ICT coordinator, a group of pupils from Year 6, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and two joint lesson observations.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Pupils' achievement in ICT is satisfactory. Standards are broadly in line with expectations and are improving.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make particularly good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the use of ICT and attain standards that are above those expected for their age. The use of ICT resources contributes well to children's development across many of the areas of learning including their personal, social and emotional development as well as to their progress in communication, language and literacy. The application of ICT for a wide range of activities, contributes significantly to the young children becoming confident about expressing their views in front of others.

Good examples include the use of a range of hand held devices such as microphones and the use of audio as well as video recorders.

- Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although there are pockets of good practice. Nevertheless, too few pupils attain higher levels.
- Staff make particularly good use of ICT to support the needs of some of the most vulnerable pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A good example is the use of specialist resources to support pupils who are hearing impaired.
- There are some good examples of ICT being used increasingly well in other subjects, such as pupils using the internet to support their work in History. This has enhanced older pupils' appreciation of Victorian Britain. Research and work undertaken in science, has enabled pupils in Year 6 to develop a good understanding of how the heart works.
- However, there are missed opportunities of making greater use of ICT to support the lower as well as the most able with their writing.
- The school makes good use of ICT to support pupils' personal development and well-being. There are numerous examples of how the effective use of ICT has helped pupils, some of whom previously displayed poor attitudes to learning, to develop as confident and positive learners, who are proud of their work and achievements.
- Pupils state that the use of ICT contributes significantly to their enjoyment of learning and they would welcome more access to ICT in lessons. They believe that ICT enables them to develop as independent learners, but that limited access to resources in class based lessons reduces the opportunities for them to take more responsibility for their learning.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using ICT; you have planned to roll out a programme of work to ensure that younger pupils develop an equally good understanding of this important area.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning of ICT are satisfactory.

- Staff have benefited from high quality training. This has resulted in them developing their confidence and competence of using ICT to support teaching and learning in a range of contexts.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and additional adults add value to ICT lessons because of their skills and the quality of guidance they receive from teachers.
- Teachers ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and learning objectives are explained, displayed and usually demonstrated on the interactive whiteboard.
- Learning is put into a meaningful context by being linked to real life experiences or learning in other areas. In Year 2 for example, pupils were learning to control a programmable toy and this was linked to the work they had been doing about shapes in mathematics.
- Teachers make good use of questions to help pupils to recall and build on previous learning. This is done particularly well in lessons that help pupils learn how to undertake searches, present and exchange

information and draft and refine their ideas. You recognise that these successful strategies are less well developed in the teaching of data handling.
- The quality of planning is too variable and does not always detail sufficiently well what pupils will learn or how the most able will be challenged in the development of their ICT skills.
- Where teaching is good, teachers make effective use of a range of strategies to meet the different learning styles of pupils. A good example was seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage when pupils were learning how to use a hand held device to video each other. The teacher asked them to practise the movement required to get the video recorder to work.
- Although planning usually details key words, there is not enough explicit teaching of new or unfamiliar vocabulary. This reduces pupils' ability to use subject specific words confidently.
- Some of the good generic teaching strategies used in other lessons are not always sufficiently well transferred to the teaching of ICT. This includes strategies to assess the level of progress pupils make during lessons and providing pupils with feedback about how well they are progressing and what they could do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the curriculum for ICT is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is inclusive and some aspects are well planned such as e-safety, internet usage as well as presenting and exchanging ideas and information.
- Pupils all receive their statutory entitlement to ICT. You are currently exploring ways of increasing this further so that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of all learners more fully, and in away that promotes greater levels of progression and continuity.
- Although ICT is being used in other subjects, it is not being done in a planned or systematic way. This is because there is no curriculum map to provide an overview of how subjects are linked. Consequently, there are missed opportunities for pupils to further apply and develop their ICT skills across the curriculum.
- Within the ICT programme of work, there is too much focus on activities and not always enough emphasis on the development of ICT skills and capabilities. You have correctly identified the need to develop a skills based curriculum and improve the quality of guidance materials.
- Pupils benefit from a range of before and after school clubs which enrich the ICT curriculum. A good example is the gardening club; pupils in this club made good use of an interactive programme to create their own calendar to show the most suitable times of the year for planting different seeds.

Leadership and management of ICT

The quality of leadership and management of ICT is satisfactory and improving rapidly.

- The ICT coordinator is relatively new in post; you support her well.
- Since September 2008, the ICT coordinator has been empowered to make a greater difference in raising the profile of ICT in the school than was previously the case. As a result, the school has made good progress in the last eight months from a low starting point.
- In the previous academic year the ICT coordinator undertook an audit of staff training needs and this enabled her to provide all staff with tailor made, good quality training. The impact can be seen in the widespread use of ICT across the school.
- However, her role as coordinator is underdeveloped. Consequently, evaluation of the subject lacks rigour and is not sufficiently systematic. Action and improvement plans for ICT do not include quantified success criteria and the intended outcomes for learners are not clear or measurable. Nevertheless, the ICT coordinator has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, such as the need to improve curriculum provision, particularly for the more able.
- You have made good progress in increasing the level of resourcing in ICT. The recent purchase of handheld technologies has given rise to pupils developing their application of ICT in more areas of the curriculum and in different locations around the school.
- With the support of the headteacher and the governing body, the ICT coordinator has ensured the school now has a range of reliable and user friendly hardware and software that are fit for purpose.
- Coordinators of other subjects do not have ICT included within their remit. This is reducing the school's ability to maximise learning through the use of ICT in other areas, and compromises the school's ability to judge the impact of ICT across the curriculum.
- The school is making satisfactory and improving use of ICT to improve the quality of its communication with staff as well as with parents and the local community.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment in ICT is satisfactory.

- You have correctly identified this aspect as a key area in need of improvement.
- Although teachers record how well pupils achieve following a unit of work in ICT, this is not done consistently well throughout the school.
- Older pupils state they would like more feedback about how well they are doing in ICT during lessons, what they can do to improve and the level at which they are working; they would also welcome having targets for ICT.
- Although the overall progress pupils make is tracked annually, this is not done regularly or rigorously enough for different groups of pupils to ensure they are all progressing equally well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing more challenge for the most able throughout the school, so that more pupils attain higher levels

- developing the role of the ICT subject coordinator so that she has a greater impact on improving achievement and raising standards
- ensuring that action and improvement plans specify how pupils will benefit and include success criteria that are measurable
- developing a consistent approach to assessment so that
  - there is a sharper focus on how well all pupils are progressing during the course of the year and how well different groups of pupils perform compared to their peers
  - pupils become more involved in the assessment of their work and are better informed about how they can improve.

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

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector