27 May 2009

Mrs T Webb
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Webb

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 19 May 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 yourself, your ICT subject leader and ICT support leader, two representatives from the Mersey Group for Learning (MGL), observation of a Year 1 and a Year 5/6 lesson, observation of your 'Brilliant book club', observation of a music lesson, an ICT 'learning walk' from Foundation Stage to Year 6, guided by members of your school council, discussion with Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and analysis of pupils' work, to observe a range of ICT activities throughout the school.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Standards in ICT are in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 1 and above by Key Stage 2. Achievement is good.

- Children enter school with ICT skills and capabilities that are below national expectations. They make good progress and by the end of the

Early Years Foundation Stage they are ready to access the National Curriculum for ICT.

- In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils continue to make good progress. By Year 2 standards are in line with the national average. By Year 6 standards are above the national average, especially in presenting information and communication.
- ICT is having a good impact on raising standards in many subjects. Good examples were observed of the well-planned use of ICT to support literacy, mathematics, science, history and music. Pupils are continually encouraged to discuss their work. In so doing, this is raising their speaking and listening skills, which is a specific focus for the school.
- The use of ICT makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development and enjoyment. Pupils work very well together and are happy to help their peers if they are in difficulty. Pupils are very proud of their achievements in ICT. They confidently discuss their work with each other, adults and visitors. School council members, who showed me round the school at the start of my visit, were very eager to point out the many aspects of ICT, and did so with confidence. Throughout the day pupils continued to show me examples of their work with pride and enthusiasm.
- By Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of the need to work safely when accessing the internet.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning are good.

- Teaching and learning are good overall, with elements of outstanding. Throughout the school lessons are very well planned and well resourced. Planning ensures that work is well matched to the needs of the different ability groups. However, you recognise that pupils identified as gifted and talented in ICT are not specifically plan for.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, and confidence in using ICT for their own professional development, and to support teaching and learning, are good.
- Pupils are very motivated by the planned activities and consequently behaviour in lessons is outstanding.
- Well informed teaching assistants give good support for group and individual activities.
- Teachers share the learning objectives of each lesson. As a result, pupils make good progress within lessons, and over time, because they have a good understanding of what is being learnt and why.
- Pupils are encouraged to self-assess their work so that they know if they have achieved the objective and also what they need to do to improve. Key Stage 2 pupils, especially, confirm that they find this very useful.
- A good range of ICT equipment is used on a regular basis. For example, in an outstanding lesson, excellent use was made of laptops, a recording program, microphones and a dictaphone to support pupils' literacy work, to produce a persuasive news report. Pupils were given

the opportunity to choose programs and equipment, which they felt best suited the task.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the ICT curriculum is good.

- The programme of study are taught and planned for well. You have moved from a national scheme to one developed in conjunction with the Mersey Grid for Learning (MGL). Pupils confirm that the curriculum is 'fun' and engaging because ICT is used in many subjects. Older pupils confirm that the use of ICT is helping them to develop their skills and knowledge in other subjects.
- ICT is used well to enable pupils to develop their independent learning and creative thinking skills. By Year 6 pupils make informed choices about which media to use and/or which is the most appropriate program to use.
- Resources for the subject are well organised and readily accessible. Pupils are encouraged to select their own resources and many were observed collecting laptops from the storage trolley, microphones or using the Interactive whiteboards (IWB), without adult supervision.
- The very successful after school 'Brilliant Book Club', run by an enthusiastic teaching assistant, uses ICT to encourage pupils, especially boys, to read. For example, pupils use the internet to research information about authors they have read and/or characters in books. They produce PowerPoint presentations, to share with others, which evaluate and recommend the range of books read. Pupils spoken to were clearly developing a love of, and enthusiasm for, reading.
- The peripatetic music teacher uses a games console well to support pupils' learning. This has a good impact on pupils' enjoyment of music and in their understanding of pitch, tone and rhythm.
- Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and above average pupils is good and well planned for. For example, pupils identified with speech and language needs are well supported and make good progress. However, you recognise that support for pupils identified as gifted and talented in ICT needs to be developed.
- An ICT club is run for part of the school year and provides extra support for pupils with an interest in the subject.
- A homework club provides access to computers and the internet for those pupils who do not have access at home.
- You are planning to refurbish older laptops, so that they will be available for pupils, especially those without access at home computers, to borrow and take home.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are good.

- You, your SMT and your governors have ensured that ICT has a high profile throughout the school.

- The ICT leader, ably supported by the ICT support leader, has made a good impact on the development of the subject, which is seeing standards rise in the school. During a period of three temporary headteachers, your ICT leader ensured that the subject continued to develop.
- Regular staff meetings enable teachers and teaching assistants to update their own skills and knowledge of hardware, software and latest initiatives. Good links have been established with MGL, who provide staff training, model lessons and provide good classroom support.
- Formal monitoring of lessons takes place as part of subject cycles. Personal feedback related to the strengths and areas for development in the teaching of ICT is given to individual teachers. This gives good support for the development of ICT and is helping to improve teachers' skills and knowledge.
- The policy of 'best value' is adhered to well. New equipment is bought on the basis of value for money and the impact is reviewed in relation to pupils' learning. The good links with MGL ensure that where there are gaps in resources, such as for data logging and control technology, they are provided by MGL on a temporary basis. However you are aware that you need to purchase resources for these aspects, so as to be able to use them more consistently across the curriculum, rather than as discrete subjects when MGL visit.
- The ICT development plan, the Cheshire County Council ICT review and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) self review are used well as tools to focus on raising standards. You are aiming to achieve the BECTA mark within the next year.
- Parents and carers, pupils and staff are well-informed about the safe use of the internet. All sign a policy for ICT and internet access, which is written in simple "5 steps" for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils. Key Stage 2 pupils have a good understanding of the more in-depth '10 rules' for internet and ICT safety. Pupils spoken to confirmed that they also consider these rules when using ICT at home. They have a good understanding of the dangers of divulging personal information over the internet or when using a mobile phone to send a text.
- The 'Acceptable Use Policy' for staff is up-to-date and ensures that they are aware of safety issues when using ICT at home or in school, or when taking information and data between school and home.
- The school website is comprehensive and informative. The newsletters and hyperlinks to educational sites provide good support and information for parents and pupils. There is a clear safety statement on the site with regard to the school's policy on using photographs of pupils.
- You have provided a permanent laptop for parents to use before and after school, to support their ICT skills.
- The 'Family Learning' initiative has provided successful ICT training for parents and carers.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is good.

- Regular assessments by teachers are made against coverage of the curriculum, the skills demonstrated by pupils, and the National Curriculum levels achieved in ICT.
- Pupils are encouraged to self-assess at the end of a lesson, or series of lessons, against the objectives for the subject and the ICT content. All spoken to find this a helpful tool for gauging how well they are doing and what they can do to improve further.
- By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. However, pupils do not know what level they are achieving in ICT, and what is required for them to move up a level.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the resources within the school, especially for control and data logging, so as not to be reliant on outside agencies for these aspects of the ICT curriculum
- developing the assessment of ICT so that pupils have a greater awareness of the skills and levels they are achieving and the steps needed to move up a level
- developing support for pupils who do not have regular access to a computer and/or the internet at home
- developing support for those who are identified as gifted and talented in ICT.

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

Anthony Green
Additional Inspector