

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



24 June 2009

Mr S Taylor
Headteacher
King Edward VI School
Cottingwood Lane
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 1DN

Dear Mr Taylor

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 9-10 June 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, a tour of the school by students, discussions with students demonstrating their work in technology and the observation of seven part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory. Standards are above average.

- Students enter the school from your three main feeder middle schools with standards which are above average. By the end of Year 9 students have reached standards which are above average. This represents satisfactory progress.
- In Key Stage 4 all students study ICT. By the end of Year 11 they have reached standards which are above average, and given their starting points at the beginning of Year 10 they make satisfactory progress.

However the higher attaining students do not always achieve the highest grades they are capable of. You have acknowledged this and are looking at strategies to enhance their progress.

- In the sixth form very few students take ICT. The majority of students make satisfactory progress but a few make inadequate progress. This has been recognised and a new curriculum is in place for September 2009.
- Students work well together when they are using all types of new technologies. They are patient with each other, take turns and their behaviour is respectful.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons, this is particularly so when they are using ICT to support their learning in other subjects. The support they receive means that the majority are making good progress.
- The students spoken to had a basic knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe when they are using new technologies. They are aware of 'stranger danger' and the issues with giving away personal details over the internet.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teachers know, and understand, the requirements of the courses they are teaching. Teachers plan appropriate activities for the majority of the students in the groups. However the activities often lack the challenge needed to ensure that the higher attaining students are able to access the top grades.
- In many lessons the work completed is task orientated rather than focused on what the students need to learn. One exception to this was a Year 10 lesson where the students were learning how to review their work, and the work of others. The students were focused on learning how to review: a critical part of the course they are following.
- In lessons where the students were using ICT to develop their learning of other subjects planning was better. There were clear demonstrations using ICT which enabled the students to learn. In one lesson the students used a voting system to review their learning at the end of the lesson. This meant that the both the students and the teacher were able to assess the learning which had occurred. In all the lessons seen students stated that they were motivated by the use of new technologies.
- In an outstanding graphics lesson the work was meticulously planned. All the needs and interests of the students were met through a varied and stimulating set of challenges. These were staged to ensure that all students achieved and they were encouraged to push themselves to reach the next stage. The students worked exceptionally well and it was commented on by one student that in graphics they had to 'think more' than in their ICT lessons.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The links with your feeder middle schools ensure that the students at Key Stage 3 have a coherent and appropriate curriculum. This includes a project based on developing and marketing a computer game which is started in the feeder middle schools in Year 8 and developed in Year 9 at King Edward's.
- At Key Stage 4 the students are able to take an accredited ICT course. All students have at least one hour a week of ICT. The students' ICT skills and capability are enhanced through the use of ICT across the curriculum. This is particularly effective in design technology where the students complete work based on programming. There are also opportunities for students to use computer added design and computer aided manufacturing (CaDCaM). The students spoken to were able to discuss their use of ICT and the advantages and disadvantages of using CaDCaM.
- However despite the fact that much of the ICT capability of the students is developed across the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4, the curriculum is not mapped. This means that there is no coherent approach to the overall ICT curriculum and this is limiting the students' progress.
- In the sixth form the curriculum has not met the needs and interests of the students, this has been acknowledge by you and your senior leadership team and you have introduced a new course more suited to the students for September 2009.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- Your systems of applying the principles of best value have been agreed with the governors. These set down the process you go through to ensure that resources purchased are the most appropriate.
- There is an ICT self-evaluation and development plan. However the grades given on the self-evaluation are generous and do not reflect the true position of the department. The development plan focuses more on the tasks which need to be completed rather than the impact on outcomes for students.
- The specialist status of technology has had an impact on student outcomes for ICT. All the students receive some of their ICT entitlement in technology and the work produced is of good quality.
- You have worked with parents to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to keep their children safe when they are using the new technologies.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is inadequate.

- Although students are doing much work using ICT across the school this is not marked or assessed according to ICT criteria. Also the ICT department does not receive any formal feedback about the work the students have done and the progress the students have made. This means that the ICT department is unaware of the progress made particularly in control technology and programming. Lack of awareness of this progress means that the ICT department does not have a complete overview of students' capability.
- In ICT lessons the work is assessed. However at Key Stage 3 the comments made are generic rather than specific to each individual student. At Key Stage 4 and the sixth form the assessment focuses on the tasks the students need to complete rather than what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- challenging the higher attaining students so that they make better progress
- ensuring that the ICT curriculum is mapped so that there is a more coherent approach and students make good progress
- focusing the leadership and management of ICT on improving the outcomes for students
- co-ordinating the assessment of ICT in the school, including the feedback of assessment to the ICT department.

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