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Mrs D Martin
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Dear Mrs Martin

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 29 June 2009 to look at work in ICT. I particularly enjoyed the Chinese lunch the pupils cooked me and being interviewed by other pupils for Firs Hill television.

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, observation of two part lessons and visits to two classes for adults.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average.

- Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are below average overall but pupils attain generally better standards where they use ICT to present their work. Pupils make broadly the expected progress from when they join school to when they leave it indicating achievement is satisfactory.
- Annual teacher assessments against National Curriculum levels show ICT standards overall are rising and particularly so for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school attributes the

widespread use of ICT by these pupils in school and their use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) out of school for marked improvements in their English and mathematics test results.

- Pupils clearly enjoy using ICT. Relationships are good although attitudes to learning are variable and particularly so amongst younger pupils.
- Older pupils have a reasonable understanding of how to keep themselves safe when online.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Lessons are planned well with the work provided being appropriate given different pupils' starting points. How teaching assistants will be deployed to support learning is specified in the lesson plans.
- Teachers have sufficient subject knowledge and capability in using the school's software applications. Classroom management is good.
- The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was better than the quality of learning. This is because teachers and teaching assistants had to work hard to keep some pupils engaged in the tasks they had been set.
- There are a wide range of ICT resources that pupils can use in all classrooms to improve their learning. These include laptops with internet access, still and video cameras, floor robots and sensors. In a Year 1 lesson pupils learnt to program floor robots and to control the movement of an on screen sprite. Year 5 pupils used a range of ICT resources to act out and record a dialogue they had written and created simple animations and slide presentations to explore the history and morality of slavery.
- The school is well ahead of national expectations for having an operational VLE in place. The VLE is used by pupils and parents to access the school's learning resources and activities from home.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good and outstanding features.

- The school is part way through a journey to radically change its provision for ICT which is now taught entirely as part of a 'creative curriculum'. This academic year new integrated topics were introduced in which the place of ICT has been carefully planned. For example, in a religious education topic pupils use spreadsheets to model the costs of various options for a family to travel to Hajj. Fonts for Urdu and Arabic scripts have been installed on the computers and special keyboards purchased to enable pupils to use ICT in their writing about the topic in these languages.
- More than 90% of pupils joining the school have English as an additional language. Accordingly the curriculum prioritises the use of ICT in developing pupils' literacy skills. Whilst there are plentiful opportunities for pupils of all ages to communicate their ideas and present their work using ICT, opportunities for pupils to use some

other aspects of ICT are less well developed. For example, the provision for pupils to learn data logging and programming is only just satisfactory.

- The school is anxious to seek out and learn from good practice elsewhere. A scheme to boost the performance of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities using music technology was adapted from an approach successfully used by a local special school. Pupils receive one-to-one coaching on the technology which the school says has boosted their self-esteem and motivation resulting in improvements in their other work in English and mathematics.
- Provision for pupils to participate in voluntary activities before, during and after school is good. A group of girls regularly stay after school for the national Computer Club for Girls scheme (CC4G). A gifted and talented media club produces 'Firs Hill television' and a newspaper. The school has purchased computer game consoles to enable those pupils who do not have access to them at home to learn to experience modern technology outside lessons.
- Provision for parents and other members of the community to develop their ICT skills at the school is outstanding. The school has secured additional funding streams to finance a range of adult classes which are greatly valued by those attending. As well as helping some parents acquire skills in using modern technology the classes also improve communication between the school, pupils' families and the diverse local community about what the school is trying to achieve and how parents and the community can become involved.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features.

- The ICT evaluation report provided for the governors is outstanding. It is clear, detailed and well substantiated by solid evidence. It accurately diagnoses the school's strengths and weakness and the actions identified to go into the school plan are appropriate and likely to bring about the necessary improvements.
- The ICT action plan is excellent and expresses how the school's vision for ICT will be achieved. It clearly identifies what needs to be done, when by, who is responsible for doing it and how the success of actions taken will be evaluated.
- The school's evaluation of its ICT provision accurately identifies the weaknesses in assessment and the action plan for next academic year specifies how this will be rectified.
- Management of ICT resources is good and effectively supports the new curriculum model the school has moved to. The school has sensibly prioritised the installation of a wireless network so that pupils are able to use laptops in all their lessons when appropriate.
- The impact of good leadership and management is seen in the strong upwards trend in standards over the last few years.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is inadequate.

- Pupils' ICT capability is extensively evaluated before they join the school through home visits. During the Foundation Stage detailed age related assessments are made and pupils' progress tracked in depth. On entry only around one third of pupils have attained age related expectations which is well below average.
- Although the use of assessment in the Foundation Stage is excellent, this approach is not followed in the rest of the school. Teachers only assess pupils' ICT attainment at the end of each year and report this to parents as a National Curriculum level. Pupils' achievements in the different aspects of ICT are not separately assessed or tracked. This means that teachers, pupils and parents are insufficiently informed about how pupils are doing and what they should be aiming for next. Without this information, teachers are unable to provide specific guidance to pupils on how they might improve their work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring provision gives equal emphasis to developing pupils' capabilities in all aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT
- developing the use of assessment so that individual pupils have targets and their progress towards them is tracked in all of the ICT strands
- ensuring pupils have guidance on how to improve their ICT work.

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