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Dear Mr Hirst

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 November 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 use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and the joint observation of parts of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory.

■ Most pupils join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at the age of four. The EYFS profile is used to assess pupils' capabilities in ICT during their first six weeks after joining the school. Pupils' experience of, and capabilities in, using ICT vary widely on entry but attainment is average by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

■ Pupils make satisfactory progress in ICT during Key Stages 1 and 2. Levels of attainment have improved over the last three years and, by the end of Year 6, attainment in ICT is broadly average. Pupils' ability to use ICT to communicate their ideas and present their work is above average and represents good progress in this aspect of the National Curriculum.

However, attainment is average in data-handling, modelling and programming. It is weaker in data logging because there have been insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their capability in this aspect. Overall, achievement in ICT is satisfactory.

■ Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Behaviour is good and they have excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils work with ICT confidently and independently.

Quality of teaching of ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is satisfactory although there are important weaknesses in assessment.

■ Pupils receive good teaching in lessons because teachers have good subject knowledge. Teachers know their pupils well and provide tasks that are challenging and engage pupils. However, on some occasions, opportunities are missed to extend the most able.

■ Pupils make good use of a reasonable range of software resources, many of which the pupils can and do use at home as they are opensource.

■ Recently, skills-based tracking sheets were introduced. These enable pupils to self-assess their ICT work. While they are providing useful information for teachers and pupils they are not integrated into the whole-school tracking system for monitoring pupils' progress.

■ Pupils' ICT capability is only assessed against the National Curriculum at the end of Year 6, based on a portfolio of work and teacher observations. Although there is some informal assessment, there is insufficient formal assessment of pupils' ICT work. Consequently, pupils have a limited understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to further improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

Quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

■ Pupils receive their statutory National Curriculum entitlement at all key stages. Work is planned to develop pupils' ICT skills and capability within the context of subjects across the curriculum. Many of the ICT experiences are designed to enhance and engage pupils, for example, the use of graphics software in Year 2. New data logging equipment is also improving pupils' ICT experiences at Key Stage 2.

■ Progression routes across the school enable pupils to develop their skills in different aspects of ICT. For instance, pupils learn to program floor robots to carry out pre-determined movements during Key Stage 1 and have opportunities to program at Key Stage 2. Pupils also learn about sequencing instructions through developing animations and/or creating computer games. Opportunities for data logging are a recent introduction to the school, although pupils in Key Stage 1 learn about sensors through a classroom pet dinosaur. However, pupils spend considerably more time

using ICT for communicating their ideas and presenting their work than they do for other aspects of the National Curriculum.

- The ICT scheme is currently being reviewed in line with the school's new curriculum in the core subjects.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

Effectiveness of the leadership and management of ICT is inadequate because of deficiencies in the use of target setting.

- The school has recently secured good improvement in ICT resources which are increasing access to ICT for all pupils, although pupils are not always able to make use of ICT to support their learning in their classrooms.

- The school aims to provide good links with home through workshops and the very informative school website and innovative ICT experiences for pupils. For example, Year 3 pupils use a discussion forum on the school's virtual learning environment to develop their literacy skills.

- The school has now put in place a strategic development plan for ICT. This accurately identifies the strengths and areas for development in ICT and demonstrates that the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement in the subject. Some actions for improvement have already been taken, for example, the ICT suite has recently been upgraded.

- However, while the school has identified the need to develop assessment in ICT, ICT targets are not used to raise achievement. Pupils are not set targets in ICT for their achievement at the end of either Key Stage 1 or 2. Pupils' individual progress is not tracked against potential outcomes meaning that the school and parents do not have sufficiently detailed information about how well they are doing. Consequently the school is unable to target extra support at those pupils who are underachieving in ICT and provide more demanding work for those who are insufficiently challenged. This limits achievement.

The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects

The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is satisfactory.

- ICT skills are taught within themes. For example, presentations linked to the theme of 'lights, camera, and action' or a leaflet about Studland Bay following a school visit.

- A wide range of peripherals, including microphones, digital microscopes and cameras, is available to pupils. They use them in contemporary contexts, such as the school radio station or in using the internet to communicate with schools both in England and overseas. However, pupils are not always able to make use of ICT in their classrooms because access is on a rota basis for the laptops or when pupils are timetabled into the ICT suite. As a result, activities tend to be too teacher-led and directed to the whole class. This limits opportunities for pupil-initiated use of ICT, although pupils do contribute their ideas well in such lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the use of target setting and an assessment system to ensure that teaching better matches pupils' needs and aptitudes and outcomes are improved across the school
- ensuring that pupils have opportunities to experience all elements of the ICT curriculum equally as they move through the school
- finding ways of making more ICT resources available in classrooms.

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

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector