11 February 2010

Mr S Devlin
Principal
Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College
Timberdine Avenue
Worcester
WR5 2XD

Dear Mr Devlin

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 1 and 2 February 2010 to look at work in ICT.

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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of seven lessons; and a tour of the school conducted by students.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

- The school evaluates students' ICT capabilities during their first few weeks in the school. This shows attainment on entry to be broadly average. Students make good progress during Key Stage 3 so that by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Although examination results in 2009 were similar to those seen nationally, current Year 11 students have already attained above average results. The proportion attaining the merit and distinction grades is approximately double that seen nationally. This represents good achievement.

- Standards in programming are average and lag behind the higher standards students demonstrate in, for instance, page layout, editing audio and video, making animations, and creating their own spreadsheets and databases.

- Students have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe when online and how to protect their personal and financial details. They are less sure about how to protect their personal technology from unwelcome intrusions.

- Students work well with each other in small groups and independently. Relationships and behaviour are good. Students say they enjoy ICT and look forward to their lessons. A teaching assistant working exclusively in ICT provides good support to students with English as an additional language and students with special needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to make the same good progress as their peers.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers explain clearly to students the kinds of outcomes they are expected to achieve, sometimes demonstrating this with exemplar materials. Lessons proceed at a fast pace. These factors, together with the regular and rigorous evaluations students make of the quality of their work against the assessment criteria, drive the good progress they make.

- Students are very clear about their current level of performance and what they need to do to improve their work. The use of assessment by ICT teachers is outstanding.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- There are good opportunities for students to develop their capabilities in using ICT to communicate and present their ideas and to manipulate data in spreadsheets and databases. Data-logging equipment is used in science by students to record and graph experimental changes.

- Students have good opportunities to develop their programming skills at Key Stage 3 with around half of them successfully writing programs using sub-routines by Year 9. However, this good start is not sustained at Key Stage 4. Although further opportunities are provided for all students to consolidate their programming skills, there are only opportunities for around a quarter of them to go on to higher level coding.

- Most students attain the equivalent of three GCSE qualifications in the time normally allocated for just one GCSE. This is a deliberate policy to ensure students encounter a breadth of ICT experiences without eating into the time available for other subjects. The volume of work to be covered was challenging for staff and students at first which was why standards remained average in the first few years of its implementation.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in ICT is good.

- There is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the ICT department. Short- and long-term plans are in place to develop the areas identified as weaknesses.

- The strong upward trend in test results at both Key Stages 3 and 4 over the last two years demonstrates the good capacity to improve.

- Resources are managed well and, where possible, freeware solutions are developed at a greatly reduced cost. Good value for money is obtained from the investment in ICT.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring all students can build upon the good start they make in learning programming at Key Stage 3 by extending the provision for computing at Key Stage 4

- developing the use of ICT so that it has a greater impact on improving the quality of learning in other subjects and raises attainment and improves achievement.

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