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Mrs J Mullan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mullan

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 pupils, during my visit on 24 and 25 February 2010 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; joint observation of 10 lessons; a tour of the school; and one short visit to another lesson.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

- Pupils in the school are aged between 3 and 19 and they join at every stage of education. Their ICT capability is assessed on entry and overall their ICT capability is exceptionally low.
- Pupils make small but steady steps in developing their ICT skills and capabilities. By the end of Key Stage 4, almost all pupils achieve an Entry Level ICT qualification: the large majority at the highest level. Therefore, all the pupils make at least good progress during their time at the school.

- In post-16, pupils have good opportunities to develop further their ICT skills and make good progress as well as building their confidence so that they can use ICT more independently.
- Pupils enjoy using ICT and behave responsibly when using the equipment. They are encouraged to make choices when they use ICT and teaching focuses on developing their independent use of ICT.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of how to be safe when using new technologies because this is taught carefully and frequently both in ICT lessons and across the curriculum.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils' progress is rigorously assessed and recorded at the end of each ICT lesson and when it is used in other subjects. Teachers use assessment information exceptionally well to refocus their planning to build on each pupil's learning and meet their very specific needs.
- Activities are accessible, challenging and interesting, and all pupils, regardless of age or ability, are actively involved in their learning. Lessons are structured well to make good use of time to develop pupils' ICT skills and capability through individual, small group and whole-class teaching. Teaching assistants are briefed extremely well on their role within lessons.
- Pupils receive considerable individual verbal feedback on their work so they can improve it. However, on a few occasions, opportunities are missed to review learning or to relate learning to the pupils' own life experiences.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- The good curriculum meets the school's aims for all pupils to develop the social and life skills for the next steps in their education and adult life. All pupils receive one hour of taught ICT a week, additional taught time is provided for those pupils who need further support. The curriculum is skilfully modified for pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3 to provide age-related learning materials that meet the specific learning needs and interests of pupils. At Key Stage 4, pupils follow an Entry Level Certificate that enables them to gain a qualification in ICT which includes the control and programming unit. Pupils are provided with additional learning experiences in relation to their abilities and learning needs at every opportunity. For example, a very few more able Key Stage 4 pupils attend a local main stream school to access GCSE and vocational ICT qualifications.
- The very few post-16 pupils also have varied opportunities to develop their ICT skills. For example, they produce a '16-19' newsletter that is distributed to all pupils and staff.

- The schemes of work, although comprehensive, do not provide progression routes for different abilities, in particular the most able. The curriculum is broadened and reinforced through the wide-ranging use of ICT in other subjects.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

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

- There is a clear vision that ICT is an essential tool to enhance learning for all pupils. ICT makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement in all subjects. ICT is led and managed well, however, while the coordination of ICT across the curriculum does ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement to all aspects of the ICT curriculum, it is not mapped systematically. Good development planning is based on a very accurate self-review and reflects the good capacity for further improvement.

The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects

The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is good with outstanding features.

- ICT makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning in all areas. Teachers have an excellent awareness of when it is appropriate to, and how to, use ICT. For example, the use of music software enabled pupils to compose, play and describe very appropriate tunes to short video clips at a level not possible if they had used musical instruments.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the ICT schemes of work to meet fully the needs of all pupils and, in particular, the most able
- taking a more systematic approach to mapping the use of ICT across the curriculum.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT in the school.

As I explained previously, 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