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Mr J Kibble
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Dear Mr Kibble

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 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; joint observation of seven part-lessons; and a tour of the school.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is satisfactory.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory.

■ Students enter the school with levels of attainment in ICT which are broadly in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of students make satisfactory progress and leave Year 11 with levels of attainment which are broadly in line with the national average. Many students studying the vocational ICT course make good progress with more attaining A and A* grades than nationally. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported exceptionally well and make outstanding progress between Years 7 and 11.

- In the sixth form, students make good progress and reach levels of attainment which are above the national average.

- Students have a good understanding of what they need to do to keep themselves safe when using new technologies. Links with the police, assemblies, citizenship lessons and work done in ICT support the students in this area.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this to prepare their lessons thoroughly. The activities and resources used in lessons encourage the students to become independent in their use of ICT. Students are also very respectful of the both the ICT equipment and others in the lessons. This is shown by their considerate behaviour and willingness to support each other's learning.

- Although some teaching is good, it is not enough to enable all students to make good progress. In some lessons, all the students are required to complete the same work in the same way. This means that some students are not challenged to make better than satisfactory progress.

- Assessment, although satisfactory overall, is much stronger at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. It is also much more comprehensive for those students following accredited ICT courses at Key Stage 4.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- At Key Stages 3 and 4, all students receive their statutory entitlement to the ICT National Curriculum. However, students who choose not to follow an accredited ICT course have a less coherent ICT experience than those students who do.

- In the sixth form, the ICT course offered is appropriate and meets the needs and interests of the students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

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

- The provision for ICT has improved considerably in the past four years. Investment in hardware and software has increased and inadequacies in the curriculum have been eradicated. This improved provision has had a positive impact on outcomes for students who are now making at least satisfactory progress with some students making good and even outstanding progress.

- The strategic leadership of ICT is clear about the strengths and weaknesses and coherent plans are in place to manage further change.

- Much staff training has been provided, and this is appreciated by the staff. It has supported them to become confident users of ICT and develop the learning which takes place in lessons.

The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects

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

- Students have a range of opportunities to use ICT across the school to support their learning. In particular, in a design technology lesson, the students made good, and some made outstanding progress, in developing their programming, sequencing and control skills.

- However, the assessment of students' work across the school is not always used successfully to provide a comprehensive and thorough understanding of each student's ICT capability. This is particularly so for those students who do not follow an accredited ICT course at Key Stage 4, and means that these students make only satisfactory progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the attainment of students at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
    - ensuring that students who do not follow an accredited ICT course at Key Stage 4 have a more coherent and challenging ICT curriculum
    - improving teaching so it is consistently good
    - developing the assessment of ICT and the use of that assessment, particularly for Key Stage 3 students and those students at Key Stage 4 who do not follow an accredited ICT course.

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

Tanya Harber Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector