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Mrs J Walker
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Walker

Ofsted 2010–11 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 the 26 and 27 January 2011 to look at work in ICT. Thank you for allowing my colleague from Spain, Maria Galobardes, to shadow the inspection.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons, of these five were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment levels are above average and all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. The students studying GCSE ICT at Key Stage 4, given their starting points, make good progress. In the sixth form, progress is good. The students who are not studying GCSE ICT make at least satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. However the progress made does depend on the options students take. Overall, students' achievement in ICT at Malbank is good.

- More vulnerable students are provided for well. They are able to access a variety of equipment and programs which support them to make good progress in both their ICT and social development.
- Students behave very well when they are using equipment and in lessons. This is because they respect the teachers and are motivated and engaged by the teaching.
- Students know and understand what they have to do to keep themselves safe when using new technologies. Their development as safe and responsible users is enhanced by the provision of a managed system which is reviewed regularly. The students have also been very involved in developing the anti cyber-bullying policy.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Teachers plan lessons well. They have good subject knowledge. Students are engaged by the resources used. For example, in one lesson, the students were challenged to write a sequence of instructions to pick up an item. They then had to follow through the instructions and discuss what went wrong. This engaged the students, enabled them to work in groups, and developed their collaborative learning skills as well as their ICT knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons have a quick pace and students of all academic abilities are challenged. The use of innovative technologies, for example an educational social networking site, is developing the students' ability to assess themselves and their peers.
- Overall assessment of work in lessons is good. However, it is stronger at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. The assessment of students' ICT work across the curriculum is not coordinated and does not provide students with detailed feedback about what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is good. Students are given the opportunity to use a wide variety of ICT programs. There is an emphasis not only on communicating and presenting information but on programming, sequencing and control. This curriculum supports the students to make good progress.
- For students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form who study examination courses in ICT, the curriculum is relevant and meets their needs and interests well. However, a large proportion of students at Key Stage 4 do not study GCSE ICT. The curriculum for these students, although covering the statutory National Curriculum, is not balanced. Some students have far better opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding than others and, as a result, make better progress. Overall therefore, the curriculum is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

Leadership and management in ICT are good.

- Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and weakness of ICT. Plans are in place to ensure that recent improvements are sustained and actions are taken to remove the weaknesses.
- The strategic leadership and management of ICT are good. The development of ICT has meant that its use to support learning in other subjects has had a positive impact on students' progress and attainment levels.
- A comprehensive, yet bespoke, training programme is in place. Staff appreciate the range of training offered. It has supported all staff to become confident users of new technologies and develop their teaching skills.
- Of particular note is the students' involvement in the development of ICT in the school. The ICT strategic user group includes staff, students and governors and has made critical decisions on purchasing ICT resources.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- enabling all students, regardless of their prior attainment and their option choices, to make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring the curriculum is balanced and all students have opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well
 - developing the assessment of ICT work done across the curriculum so that students' progress is monitored and action is taken if it is not at least satisfactory
 - improving the quality of assessment in Key Stage 3 to the standard of that in Key Stage 4.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Harber Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector