

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 May 2012

Mr J Panayi
Headteacher
Hedingham School and Sixth Form
Yeldham Road
Sible Hedingham
Halstead
CO9 3QH

Dear Mr Panayi

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 May 2012 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 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 nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

- Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 so that by the end of Year 9 they are achieving above the national average. GCSE-equivalent results are well above average with many gaining distinctions in a vocational qualification. Some of the current Year 10 students are studying for GCSE ICT; these are on track to mostly achieve grades A*, A or B. Across Key Stages 3 and 4, students have strengths in the business applications and computer science aspects of ICT, including programming. They do less well in those aspects of ICT associated with media. In the past, GCE A-level ICT results have been poor with a significant number of students dropping out of the course before its end. However, the switch to a vocational level 3 course has improved outcomes considerably.

- Those students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve or exceed their targets. They receive outstanding support from a specialist ICT teaching assistant during lessons.
- The impact of teaching on students' understanding of how to stay safe using ICT is satisfactory. Students' response to teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding, for example a Year 7 lower-ability group showed excellent independence and motivation.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Relationships between students and teachers are very good, showing mutual respect, with each listening to and building on the other's ideas. Planning is done in great detail, building on an assessment of what the students know and understood from previous lessons. Consequently, good differentiation is at the heart of many lessons. The focus on setting targets, monitoring and intervening when necessary is impressive and means that students make good progress. Crucially, students know what their targets are and how they are to go about achieving them. ICT subject-specialist teachers plan interesting lessons that engage students. Their good subject knowledge means they can answer questions accurately and pose challenging questions. However, some of the questioning is too closed and here teaching sometimes misses opportunities for students to investigate for themselves, in pairs or in groups.
- Good and sometimes outstanding use is made of ICT in other subjects. For example, in one dance lesson an excellent set of ICT activities promoted discussion in performance and technique, and in geography a lesson was brought to life using video clips. When ICT was used as a carousel of activities in German, students made good progress in both grammar and speaking skills. The work done by students in these and other subjects does not inform the overall assessment of students' ICT capability.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. In Years 7 and 8 it is well planned to provide progression through a range of topics including computer science and programming, but the media aspects of ICT are not represented well. The Year 9 curriculum prepares students for the vocational course beginning in Year 10 but does not provide a full range of ICT experiences. The school has recognised these issues in its self-evaluation and is changing the curriculum to address them for the next academic year.
- In Key Stage 4, more challenge is now provided for the more able with the introduction of GCSE and, for the new academic year, an introduction of optional ICT. The success of this model rests, to some extent, on the

tracking of students' ICT achievements in other subjects, which presently does not happen. Evidence indicates that some subject such as music, technology and mathematics contribute very well to students' ICT capability; other subject such as art contribute less.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is good.

- Outcomes for students over the last three years show significant improvement. The school continues to make generous provision for infrastructure, hardware and applications so that teachers and students have access to ICT that works well as and when they need it. The virtual learning environment, for example, is used increasingly by staff and students as a learning resource and many teachers use email to set and mark students' work.
- The improvement in tracking and intervention to make sure students achieve well is very impressive. A clear vision for ICT is acknowledged by all. The subject is well led, showing a good depth of understanding of the current issues surrounding ICT in schools. Needs for the new academic year have been identified and planned for accordingly; for example some teachers are now attending university-led training in aspects of computer programming in order to sharpen their subject knowledge. Senior managers are accurate in their assessment of standards, teaching and learning. The ICT department's major review is accurate and leads into a well-constructed development plan. However, no whole-school ICT development plan is in place to identify, among other things, professional development needs. Consequently ICT professional development is not strategically planned, although all staff speak highly of the training provided in using the student tracking system and the day-to-day support they receive from the technicians in the school.
- 'Impact studies', showing how ICT has affected subjects such as music and technology, are a particularly strong feature of leadership and management and have good potential to be a means of sharing good practice across the school. Overall, given the improvements, leadership and the systems in place, the school shows good capacity to improve further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving questioning skills and providing more opportunities for students to learn for themselves rather than relying on the teacher as the knowledge base
- improving progression through the curriculum by coordinating the cross-curricular use of ICT and using assessment of ICT in other subjects to inform curriculum planning
- producing a whole-school self-evaluation and development plan for ICT that identifies resource and continuing professional development needs.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

John Williams
Additional Inspector