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Miss Levenson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Levenson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 March 2008 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 quality of assessment.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Overall, achievement and standards in ICT are judged to be satisfactory.

- Students join the school with broadly average capabilities in ICT although there is no baseline assessment or checks on progress since the Key Stage 2 teacher assessments until the end of Year 7. By the end of Year 9 they reach standards which are broadly average and their achievement is satisfactory.
- At Key Stage 4 and post-16, those who take an ICT qualification reach standards which are broadly average. The progress of other students is only evaluated by teacher assessments at the end of the year; this is being developed further.

- Students are taught about how to stay safe online and are beginning to use e-mail and the school website and emerging virtual learning platform to access and submit work from home in some subject areas.

### Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Overall, teaching and learning of ICT is satisfactory.

- The subject knowledge of teachers within ICT is good and they have a clear view of the requirements of the qualifications being followed.
- Tasks are differentiated and support less able students well. However, the progress of more able students is constrained by over use of worksheets and the rigid nature of many tasks. This prevents students from developing into more independent learners. Some subject leaders have well developed plans showing how ICT is used and integrated into their curriculum but this is not consistent across all subjects. Insufficient attention has been given to how the virtual learning platform will improve learning across all areas.

### Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the ICT curriculum is satisfactory.

- All students in Key Stage 3 have timetabled lessons which follow a recognised commercial scheme of work. This ensures all statutory aspects are covered.
- The requirements of coursework are made available and students are developing their understanding of what is required to achieve particular grades.
- Students in Key Stage 4 and post-16 may choose to take ICT qualifications although recent changes in national requirements for qualifications have led to considerable turbulence in what is offered.
- Older students who do not take an ICT qualification have the opportunity to develop their skills through other subjects. The quality of this is variable depending on which other subjects they take, as not all staff are clear about the vision for ICT within the school. Some staff have developed ICT within their own areas extensively and are leading the way, such as the use of Module within business studies. In some, subjects ICT is not being used as effectively as it might be to improve learning and raise standards.

### Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- The ICT resources the school has are well managed and suitable training has been made available to staff.
- A vision for ICT has been communicated to staff, but in some subjects there is a lack of understanding about how it can be used effectively to raise standards.

- There has been some evaluation of the ICT department by senior leaders, leading to suitable areas for development. However this is not clearly focused on the impact for students and raising standards.
- Within the ICT department, leadership has been too slow to provide a strong lead on key issues including consistent tracking of progress, raising of standards and promoting independence of use for students.
- Delegated budget and dedicated Standards Fund have been used for developing the ICT resources, and equipment and the infrastructure is of a high standard and well maintained by the technical support team.

### Use of Assessment

- Baseline assessment only takes place late in Year 7 which does not give a good indication of their attainment on entry to the school. Other means of establishing attainment on entry are not used.
- Assessment within the ICT department is adequate although inconsistent between teachers. Assessment of ICT skills for those who are not taking a qualification in Key Stage 4 and post-16 is inadequate because their use of ICT in other subjects is not monitored.
- Students use the course requirements and grade descriptors to review and evaluate their work. Many students know what grade they are aiming for but are not always clear about the next step they need to take to achieve this.

### Inclusion

- The school has informally identified students who might not have access to a computer or the internet at home and provide opportunities for access during breaks or after school.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make good use of ICT resources to help them access the curriculum.
- Opportunities for extended use of ICT by higher attaining students are dependent on their subject choice or their own determination to develop their skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing more independent learning so that students are more active in choosing to use their ICT skills in other curriculum areas
- communicating a clear vision of ICT to all staff so that the experience of students is more consistent and it becomes a tool for raising standards
- implementing consistent tracking systems for ICT so that the progress of all students is monitored and evaluated across all key stages and curriculum areas
- developing the use of the virtual learning platform to enhance teaching and learning in a wider range of curriculum areas.

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/local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders  
Additional Inspector