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Ms Stokes
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Dear Ms Stokes

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT (Information Communication Technology)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 September 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement and standards are good.

- Foundation stage profiles show pupils' overall attainment on entry to be broadly average. The school has developed an approach to evaluating pupils' attainment on entry specifically in ICT. This shows that although pupils generally have a better than usual exposure to technology at home, their ability to use ICT is broadly average when they start school.

- In the Foundation Stage pupils display a high degree of competence and confidence in using a range of new technologies including digital microscopes, digital cameras, walkie talkies and radio controlled toys.
- By Year 6 pupils use word processing, page layout software and spreadsheets capably to improve their learning in a range of other subjects and contexts.
- Although pupils make better progress in some years than in others, overall achievement is good and standards are above average.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants to make the same good progress as other pupils.
- Pupils enjoy and are enthusiastic about the many opportunities they have to use ICT. They work well together on co-operative tasks and are accustomed to working independently at other times. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are outstanding. Pupils have an excellent awareness of the need to keep themselves safe when online and a very good understanding of how to do so. A few higher attaining pupils are aware of the dangers of identity theft, fraud and 'phishing' posed by engaging in online transactions.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are good.

- Good planning, which is well informed by assessment of pupils' earlier work, ensures that tasks are suitably challenging for all abilities. The roles teaching assistants are expected to play in the lesson are specified in the planning.
- Some teachers have excellent subject and pedagogical knowledge and have been appointed by the local authority to model good practice in neighbouring schools. Teachers and teaching assistants have mostly good subject knowledge overall although there are weaknesses in specific aspects of ICT such as in the use of databases and programming.
- Teachers have good classroom management skills and ensure learning progresses at a good pace. Learning aims are explained clearly and teachers evaluate what pupils have learnt against those aims at the end of the lesson. Skilful use of questioning to test and develop understanding was observed.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is outstanding.

- Provision for almost all most aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT is excellent except for the opportunities pupils have to learn how to write simple computer programs, which are satisfactory. This aspect of the ICT curriculum is less well developed because it is the aspect that teachers feel the least confident about.
- The quality of curriculum planning is excellent. Very good opportunities for pupils to use ICT are built into most subjects.

- Provision for pupils to use ICT outside lessons is outstanding. Around half of Key Stage 1 pupils and a third of Year 6 pupils choose to stay on after school each week to develop their ICT capabilities. Older pupils have the opportunity to build upon and extend the skills they are taught in ICT lessons for example learning to use some of the more complex functionality of spreadsheets. Younger pupils access the school's ICT resources and develop their capabilities in using digital cameras, use art software and explore the internet. Pupils say that they want to stay on after school has finished because 'the work is interesting and exciting'. These extremely successful clubs make an important contribution to the above average standards attained by pupils.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are good.

- You have made the development of ICT a high priority for the school. Over the last few years there has been a significant investment in training and in resources. Considerable effort has been put into planning high quality learning activities and to ensuring ICT is used well to improve learning in other subjects. As teachers' and pupils' skills and confidence have developed through the greater use of ICT, the quality of learning has improved too and resulted in a marked rise in standards.
- Rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of pupils' ICT work have been introduced which result in teachers receiving written feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. Good leadership has brought about significant improvements in the use of ICT and good management has ensured the necessary resources and training have been made available despite budgetary constraints.
- Self-evaluation is excellent and informs strategic planning well. You have a very good awareness of the school's strengths and plans are already in place to address the weaknesses that you have identified. The ICT co-ordinator recognises she needs to place a greater emphasis on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in future.
- Resources are extremely well managed. Full time technical support is in place ensuring that computer systems are reliable. All four principles of 'best value' are applied in planning future upgrades and costs have been worked out in detail.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is satisfactory.

- Pupils' work in ICT is assessed frequently against National Curriculum expectations and awarded a level. Levels are entered into a tracking system so that the ICT co-ordinator can monitor the progress being made by individual pupils. However, pupils do not have individual targets for ICT.

- The school intranet is used well to compile and share electronic portfolios of pupils' work at different levels. This enables teacher assessments to be standardised and ensures judgements are consistent and reliable.
- Although curriculum planning highlights where pupils use ICT to help their learning in other subjects, teachers have only recently begun to assess pupils' use of ICT when working in other subjects.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring all staff have the necessary subject knowledge, skills and confidence to teach all aspects of the ICT curriculum
- ensuring pupils have individual ICT targets so that pupils know what they are aiming for and so the school can identify who is achieving well and who is falling behind
- assessing pupils' use of ICT when working in other subjects.

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 and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector