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28 November 2008

Mr J Nicholls
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Dear Mr Nicholls

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12-13 November 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 parts of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory. Standards reached at the end of each key stage are broadly in line with national standards.

- The school uses the Key Stage 2 English, mathematics and science test results to establish the baseline for ICT. This shows students enter the school with standards that are broadly in line with the national average.
- Achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and has remained at this level in the recent past.
- All students complete an accredited ICT course in Key Stage 4 and make satisfactory progress. They reach standards broadly in line with the national average.
- Students' behaviour in ICT is good and relationships with staff are positive.

- Teaching assistants work well with students and teachers and this ensures that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen ranged from outstanding to inadequate.
- The better lessons were well-planned. Staff knew the students' abilities and adapted the lesson to ensure that students made good process.
- In the weaker lessons the activities were not sufficiently based on the prior assessment of student progress and did not enable students to make progress appropriate to their capabilities.
- In some lessons students completed the tasks set with little understanding of what they were doing or why.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is inadequate.

- The recent changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 are having a beneficial impact on results. Recent tracking data shows that students are making better progress than before.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is based on the National Strategy units and is providing opportunities for students to work more independently. The units are currently being adapted to fit the students' needs.
- At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students do not receive their full statutory entitlement to ICT. Not all aspects of the ICT National Curriculum are fully covered. For example not all students complete work on data logging and control. Although students do have some access to control activities in science their progress is not assessed or fed back to the ICT department.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is not mapped or coordinated nor is assessment data from across the curriculum gathered. This means that delivery is not monitored sufficiently to ensure that the curriculum is fully covered. Students' ICT progress is not adequately assessed across the curriculum.
- You have recognised this issue and plans are now in place to ensure that all students will receive their statutory entitlement.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- The strategic leadership and management of ICT offered by the head and leadership team are good. The very new leadership team are beginning to tackle the development issues for ICT across the school. However

developments are at an early stage and require further time to be assessed.

- An ambitious and creative whole school development plan is in place. The ICT department development plan is up to date and relates well to whole school aims. Both plans have clear targets and deadlines for achievement. Accountability is clear.
- Subject plans are not sufficiently based on the systematic and thorough evaluations of progress made by students in previous years, although some consideration of previous years results is evident.
- Progress made by students in ICT is tracked by the ICT co-ordinator and an intervention programme is in place to ensure that students who are falling behind are appropriately identified and supported.
- The ICT co-ordinator audits the training needs of all staff across the school and provides appreciated training courses to improve staff ICT capability.
- Monitoring of teaching is well embedded. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored frequently by school leaders and appropriate support is put in place. The use of outside consultants has improved the quality of ICT teaching across the school.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is inadequate.

- At Key Stage 4 students are not aware of their present level of achievement. Feedback from teachers does not enable them to judge how well they are doing compared to their target grades. Marking does not include sufficient comments on what to do to improve.
- At Key Stage 3 students do not know what level they are working at and very few of them are able to say what they need to do to improve. This is because feedback to students at Key Stage 3 tends to be brief and focuses on task completion rather than what they need to do to improve their ICT capability.
- Assessment information on the use of ICT by students across the whole curriculum is not coherently managed. This means that assessments of the students' levels are not always secure.
- Students are assessed and feedback on their progress is made available to them. However this is primarily done verbally and does not link progress to the students' individual targets.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs and interests of all the students and covers all required aspects of the National Curriculum
- developing the reliability and frequency of assessment to enable students to know where they are, what they are aiming for and how they are going to achieve it
- ensuring that the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in all ICT lessons.

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

Clifford Mainey
Additional Inspector