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Mr D Hoggins  
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Dear Mr Hoggins

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 October 2009 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 use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

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 and the school's virtual learning environment; analysis of students' work; observation of 11 part lessons; and short visits to another three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

- Students' ICT attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. It is assessed through tasks and activities in their first two terms. This information together with other school data are used to set challenging targets for their achievement.

- GCSE results from both 2008 and 2009 show that an above the national average proportion of students achieve an A\* to C pass, and in 2009 a significant proportion of these were at the highest grades. This represents good progress between Year 7 and Year 11.
- Assessment data and scrutiny of work indicate that the school accurately assesses students' National Curriculum levels. Standards in most aspects of ICT learning are above average and, in particular, in communicating, manipulating data and presenting ideas. While all students have experiences of data-logging, this aspect of the ICT curriculum is not formally assessed. Standards and progress in programming are variable, with some students making outstanding progress.
- Students with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities make good progress. A good range of software is provided to effectively support their learning, for example, in developing literacy or numeracy or learning a modern foreign language. Materials are specially adapted and made available via the virtual learning environment (VLE). A few students are provided with laptops, which they use in lessons or take home to enable them make the same good progress as their peers.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of how to use the Internet safely is outstanding because this is promoted in both ICT lessons and across the curriculum.

#### Quality of teaching of ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Their classroom management is good. They make good use of ICT in their lessons and use a wide range of resources, all of which are available online. These enable students to work independently and provide good opportunities to challenge the most able and support those who need more help.
- Teachers routinely assess student progress, both in lessons and through marking so that students develop good knowledge and understanding, and become confident and skilled users of ICT. Students are well-informed about their progress and what they need to do to improve.

#### Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- All students in Years 7 to 10 have at least one lesson of ICT a week taught by an ICT specialist. Students in Year 7 also make use of ICT in their 'Opening Minds' lessons, which develops their understanding of the real life application of ICT. All aspects of the ICT curriculum are covered either

through ICT lessons or other subjects. For example, the programming and control are mainly taught in design technology lessons.

- Most students are entered for the GCSE examination a year early at the end of Year 10. In Year 11, students use ICT extensively both in and out of lessons to very effectively support their learning in their GCSE subjects. A few students at Key Stage 4 follow an alternative curriculum; they have good access to ICT which supports both their ICT and subject learning. Beyond this, there are few opportunities for students to study a broader range of ICT or computing courses.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is good.

- There is a clear vision and leadership for the development of ICT at both school and department level. Both students and teachers are expected to make use of ICT on a daily basis, and ICT is viewed by all as an essential tool. ICT staff inform teachers in other subjects in general terms of students' ICT capability and discuss the students' use of ICT.
- Leaders review ICT provision regularly, including the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Well thought through actions are leading to improvement in students' ICT experiences and progress.
- The development of the VLE has been remarkable both in terms of relevant content and usage, and it is impacting positively on student achievement. At Key stage 3, almost all students are regularly completing independent learning tasks set via the VLE.

### Use of ICT to support learning in other subjects

The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is good.

- ICT is used very widely across the school, both in the classroom and as a management tool. Teachers make good use of ICT because they have a good understanding of how ICT can act as a 'carrier for learning'. For example, the use of animation to teach properties of waves and diffraction in a physics lesson enabled students to visualise difficult concepts and make outstanding progress in their knowledge and understanding. In a PE lesson, boys in particular were able to reflect and improve on their performance of a gym routine because they could see both their own and the team's performance.
- Students' use of ICT across the curriculum is not routinely mapped or assessed. As a result, much of the ICT work that students do in other subjects does not contribute to their overall ICT assessment.

- All teachers are confident users of ICT, they are able to skilfully use interactive whiteboards or move between different software packages in whole-class teaching. Teachers are discerning users of ICT and achieve a good balance in its use which does not just focus on the presentation of work but covers all aspects of ICT. Students' confident ICT skills ensure that their ICT use does not detract from the subject learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a more cohesive and systematic approach to coordinating, mapping and assessing the use of ICT across the curriculum to fully inform all staff and raise students' ICT capability
- considering ways to introduce a wider range of courses related to the school's computing specialism.

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

Angela Corbett  
Her Majesty's Inspector