

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr Cooper  
Frederick Gent School  
Mansfield Road  
South Normanton  
Alfreton  
Derbyshire  
DE55 2ER

Dear Mr Cooper

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 and 16 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 across the school. 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 nine part lessons and a tour of the school by students.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is inadequate.

- Students enter the school with attainment broadly in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, students have made satisfactory progress and attainment is broadly average.
- At the end of Key Stage 4 students' attainment in ICT is below average. This means that between Year 7 and Year 11 the students make inadequate progress in ICT.

- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported in lessons by well-trained teaching assistants. Traveller children are supported well to ensure that they, through the use of ICT, can access their lessons when they are not at the school. This means that after periods of time spent travelling these students no longer have to catch up before resuming normal lessons.
- The students work well together in ICT lessons. They are prepared to help and support each other and their behaviour is good. They respect the equipment and use it with care.
- Students have satisfactory knowledge of how to use new technologies responsibly.

#### Quality of teaching of ICT

The quality of teaching of ICT is satisfactory.

- Teachers and teaching assistants have good ICT subject knowledge. This was used to good effect when planning lessons.
- Verbal feedback in lessons ensures that students are aware of what they need to do next and what they need to do to improve their work. However, the written feedback students receive is limited and does not support them as well.
- In some lessons, most of the students were asked to complete the same work. This meant that some students' progress was restricted and other students struggled to complete the work.

#### Quality of the ICT curriculum

The quality of the ICT curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum at Key Stage 3 ensures that the students receive their statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum. However, the structure of the ICT curriculum at Key Stage 3 does not challenge all the higher attaining students. The 'opening minds' course in Year 7 enables the students to integrate the use of ICT into different subjects.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is balanced and covers the statutory ICT National Curriculum. However, the restricted amount of time which the students had to complete their qualification in ICT in the past contributed greatly to the inadequate progress the students made between Year 7 and Year 11. Although this was recognised and students in the present Year 10 now have an appropriate amount of time, the present Year 11 still have a very limited ICT curriculum time. So, although they cover the statutory ICT National Curriculum, they have limited time to complete their ICT qualification.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management of ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management of ICT is satisfactory.

- In the past year, you have made many changes in ICT including: the curriculum; leadership and management; developing the role of the ICT advanced skills teacher; and providing much training to staff. For example, all staff have the opportunity to take a GCSE in ICT. This is starting to impact on the progress made by students. Staff, particularly those supporting students in lessons, are more confident about their ICT ability and their knowledge is improving.
- You have a dedicated and very experienced technical support team. They offer training to staff, manage the virtual learning environment (VLE) and support learning. Because of this team, you have an ICT network which allows the students to access a wider range of websites which supports the students in becoming responsible users of new technologies.
- The VLE has had a positive impact on the students' ICT learning. They are able to organise their work, manage deadlines and they are becoming more independent in their learning.

Subject issue: the use of ICT across the curriculum

The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Students have access to a wide variety of ICT equipment in their lessons as a direct result of the mathematics and computing specialist status. This equipment is enhancing the learning for the students. For example, in a music lesson, good use was made of ICT. It enabled the students to compose pieces of music more efficiently and to greater effect. Some of the students would have made very limited progress without the ICT because they did not play the keyboard.
- However, the use of ICT across the school is not coordinated. The ICT work that students complete in other subjects is not communicated to the ICT department. Equally, staff in other areas do not know what the students are capable of.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the progress made by students in ICT by:
  - developing teaching, particularly the use of written assessment
  - providing a curriculum which challenges the students to attain the higher levels and supports the less able

- ensuring the use of ICT across the school is coordinated so that all staff are aware of the students' ICT abilities and can support them to make better progress in ICT.

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

Tanya Harber Stuart  
Her Majesty's Inspector