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Mr D Stradling
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Dear Mr Stradling

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff during my visit on 03 - 04 March 2008 to look at work in information and communication technology (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 four part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good and by the end of Years 6 and 8 standards are above nationally expected levels.

- Most pupils arrive at the school with an average level of ICT skill and capability. They make good progress, although this is slightly better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 3.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to produce multi-media presentations and by Year 8 pupils can create simple animations as well as web pages with hyperlinks and video clips.
- The school's virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well to help raise standards in ICT.
- Where ICT is being used in other subjects it is helping to raise standards by accelerating the pace of learning. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics and science, as well as in history and geography.

- ICT contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils learn to work collaboratively, help each other and use ICT as an effective communications tool. A good example is when pupils host the school's radio programme.
- The online work about mathematics around the world, is not only helping to improve pupils' mathematical skills but is also increasing their appreciation of other countries and cultures.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning of ICT are good.

- Teaching and support staff demonstrate good subject knowledge.
- ICT has had a significant impact on improving the overall quality of teaching and learning across the school. It has enabled teachers to bring the world into the classroom, particularly in history and geography. This has helped to make learning more relevant and purposeful.
- Most teachers make particularly good use of whiteboard technology to engage and motivate pupils and to provide clear and visually stimulating demonstrations.
- Teachers make good use of external web sites, a good example being the site provided for mathematics by the Primary National Strategy.
- Where teaching is most effective the quality of daily planning is strong, it identifies assessment opportunities, key words as well as how the lesson will cater for the different interests and needs of pupils. Good lessons include sufficient time for pupils to learn and apply new skills.
- Where aspects of teaching are less successful there are missed opportunities for pupils to discuss their work. This limits the extent to which assessment is used during the course of a lesson and reduces opportunities for pupils to use key words in context.
- There are often missed opportunities for pupils to make notes during ICT lessons, for example of key words or learning objectives.
- Not all pupils are provided with regular formal feedback about how they are progressing during the course of a unit of work.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the curriculum for ICT is good.

- The curriculum for ICT promotes good levels of progression and has been adapted to meet the needs and interests of learners.
- All pupils receive their ICT National Curriculum entitlement, which is supplemented by a good range of ICT clubs.
- The school is rising to the challenge of providing a condensed Key Stage 3 ICT curriculum.
- All subjects include a unit of work about ICT. However, ICT is not used regularly by pupils across the whole curriculum because access to laptops and hand held technology for use in the classroom is limited.

Leadership and management of ICT

The quality of leadership and management are good overall.

- Strategic leadership and management of ICT are significantly enhanced by support from the school's senior management.
- The ICT subject leader is well supported by a very effective ICT support assistant. This has helped to improve the quality of the learning environment in the ICT suites. This also ensures the school's hardware is reliable and the range of software is stimulating, of high quality and fit for purpose.
- The ICT leader undertakes regular audits of staff's training needs. He ensures staff receive appropriate support and coaching. This has led to the vast majority of staff making good and regular use of whiteboard technology.
- The ICT leader has provided the school with a well structured VLE. However, although this is used well by the ICT and mathematics departments, the VLE is underused as a leadership and management tool and to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- ICT is having a positive impact on whole-school improvement, by enabling leaders and managers to make better use of data, by reducing paper work and by helping to raise standards.
- The overall quality of evaluation of ICT although accurate is not sufficiently detailed. Consequently, improvement plans for ICT, do not focus sharply enough on the intended outcomes for learners and success criteria are not sufficiently measurable.

Use of assessment

The quality of assessment in ICT is satisfactory with some good aspects.

- The ICT subject leader makes good use of data to track and monitor the progress made by pupils and to set and review targets. This is helping to ensure that targets are challenging.
- The VLE is used as an effective tool in ICT to help pupils review learning objectives as well as to assess their work and the work of others.
- Pupils would welcome more use of ICT when they are being tested about what they have learnt in other subjects. There are already good examples of this being done in the school, such as in geography with the work pupils have done on rivers.
- Although the ICT department inform other staff of pupils' levels in ICT, this does not include information about what has been covered or how well pupils are able to use different software applications.

Inclusion

The subject's contribution to the inclusion of pupils is good.

- ICT is used successfully by the special educational needs department to support to pupils at risk of underachieving, particularly in English and mathematics; it is also used well to provide some of the most capable pupils with enrichment activities.
- ICT is used effectively to meet the needs pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities (LDD). This enables LDD pupils to make good progress.

Consequently, these pupils are able to achieve higher standards and produce work of better quality than they would otherwise have been able to.

- The school provides good additional access to ICT in school for those pupils who do not have access to ICT at home.
- Individual learning plans make appropriate reference to ICT as a strategy to help pupils meet their targets.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring ICT lessons are consistently well planned, include opportunities for pupils to make notes and receive regular feedback
- increasing levels of resourcing in ICT to help embed ICT more firmly across the curriculum
- developing the use of the VLE as a leadership and management tool as well as to support teaching and learning across the curriculum
- ensuring that the evaluation of ICT is used to inform action planning that is more sharply focussed on the intended outcomes for learners with success criteria that are measurable.

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

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector