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Dear Mr Noakes

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 24 of September to look at work in ICT.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of ICT, 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 discussions with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is satisfactory and pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress from a low starting point.
- Children in the Early Years have benefited from receiving more access to ICT and this has helped to accelerate the progress they make in developing basic ICT skills in the Foundation Stage.
- ICT contributes very well to pupils' attitudes to learning and motivates them to want to learn. This includes boys who were previously identified as being reluctant readers.

- When used as a tool to support learning, ICT is having a noticeable impact on raising standards particularly in subjects such as history, mathematics and science.
- Older pupils would welcome more use of ICT in literacy lessons, particularly for editing and improving written work.
- Pupils would like to know the level at which they are working and what they need to do to reach a higher level.
- The school makes good use of ICT to meet the needs of its most vulnerable pupils as well as to help pupils to practise basic literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, targeted pupils feel more confident about their reading and older pupils report improved scores with their mental arithmetic.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT are satisfactory.

- Teachers have benefited from the training they have received especially in how to make effective use of interactive whiteboards (IWB).
- Teachers make particularly good use of IWB for the introductory parts of lessons and to demonstrate new learning. A good example is in the use of simulations in science with teachers for example showing pupils in Year 6 the effect of light and water on a growing plant. Pupils benefit from being able to alter the variables to see how this impacts on the growth of a plant.
- There are pockets of good practice in the school, but this is still patchy.
- Teaching provides good opportunities for pupils to work independently for example when undertaking research in history and when using art or graphics programmes.
- Pupils enjoy using ICT and would welcome more opportunities of using it as a learning tool in their classrooms.
- Teachers in both key stages and in the Early Years Foundation Stage have made effective use of digital stills and video for pupils to record and at times evaluate their work.
- Where teaching is good, planning is detailed and includes key questions and clear learning intentions for pupils of different abilities. Lessons progress at a good pace with pupils participating actively from the very beginning. Pupils work collaboratively and develop their skills and capabilities in a meaningful context. A good example was seen in Year 6 with pupils learning how to interrogate and manipulate data about those who had served on HMS Victory.
- Where there are weaknesses in teaching the use of assessment strategies to support and enhance learning in lessons is underdeveloped; pupils are not clear about the intended learning outcomes and are not encouraged to practise articulating what they have learnt or how they might improve their work. Key words or not sufficiently well taught or displayed and this is unhelpful to pupils with language needs.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

Quality of the curriculum for ICT is satisfactory.

- The programme of work has recently been improved and now provides clearer guidance about skills and understanding as opposed to mere activities. This is leading to improving rates of progression.
- The new programme of work helps to ensure that all areas within the programme of study are now being covered and this is leading to pupils' developing a better knowledge and understanding of control technology.
- There are increasing links between ICT and other subjects; however, there is currently no overview, which identifies the possible links. Consequently, the application of ICT has yet to become firmly embedded in all subjects.
- Pupils speak confidently about the unit of work, which teaches them how they can keep safe when using ICT in and outside of school.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- ICT developments in the school are well supported by the senior leadership team and governing body. This has led to an increase in provision including in the Early Years. As a result, every class has an IWB, there is an ICT suite as well as two ICT bays, and the school has invested heavily in a wide range of hardware and software.
- The newly appointed ICT co-ordinator has produced a helpful portfolio to exemplify standards for all year groups and has reviewed and updated the ICT policy. She has also helped to improve the quality curriculum guidance for ICT.
- Together with the former ICT co-ordinator, you have ensured that staff in need of support with ICT have been able to access suitable training.
- There is an adequate understanding of the strengths in ICT and areas in need of improvement.
- Those responsible for leading and managing other subjects do not have ICT formally included within their remit.
- The governors are provided with annual updates about progress and development in ICT and with your support, the ICT co-ordinator has helped to ensure that best value principles are applied when purchasing new equipment.
- However, the role of the new ICT co-ordinator is underdeveloped.
- There are no targets set for pupils in ICT and the extent to which equality of opportunity is ensured in the subject is not being monitored.
- The action plan for the subject lacks detail including how pupils will benefit from changes made. Furthermore, outcomes are not sufficiently measurable or focused on raising achievement.

Use of Assessment

Use of assessment in ICT is inadequate.

- You have correctly identified this as an area in need of immediate improvement.
- The school has yet to adopt a method for the systematic tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Consequently, there is not a secure view about how well pupils of different abilities and groups are progressing.
- Pupils would welcome more written feedback about how well they have done in ICT and what they need to do to improve.
- Although teachers evaluate how well pupils have met their learning objectives for lessons and at the end of a unit of work, this is not done in a way that could be used to help level pupils' work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing assessment strategies, which help teachers to accurately judge what pupils have understood during the course of a lesson as well as to track pupils' progress more rigorously
- ensuring pupils know the level at which they are working and what they can do to improve
- increasing the proportion of teaching in ICT, which is consistently good
- developing the role of the ICT co-ordinator and include ICT more formally within the remit of other subject leaders.

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