10 July 2009

Mr A Davies
Headteacher
Beechen Cliff School
Alexandra Park
Bath
Somerset
BA2 4RE

Dear Mr Davies

Ofsted survey inspection programme – E-safety

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 July 2009 to look at work in e-safety.

As outlined in my initial letter, this visit looked at:

- the extent to which schools teach learners to adopt safe and responsible practices in using new technologies
- e-safety training for staff.

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 analysis of students' work.

The overall effectiveness of e-safety in the school is satisfactory.

Outcomes for learners

The outcomes for students are satisfactory.

- Students are kept safe in the school. This is a result of the secure systems used for monitoring information communication technology (ICT) usage in classrooms and across the network, but most importantly through students being aware of the school's expectations, a strong moral code and a willingness to follow the rules.
- Systems are in place to restrict student access to websites, however filtering systems do restrict students' capacity to use ICT for further independent study.

- A secure email system supports good communication between staff and students in particular assisting students undertaking coursework or whilst on study leave.
- Staff are proactive in monitoring electronic communications in school and as a result instances of cyber bullying are extremely rare.
- Students have a good knowledge of the risks and how to keep safe whilst using new technologies; for the majority of students this information has come from the media, friends or from parents. Whilst the school's ICT curriculum covers issues of e-safety at Key Stage 3 and 4, students felt this reinforced rather than developed their understanding.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision is satisfactory

- All students Years 7-11 receive guidance on the safe use of technologies as part of their core ICT curriculum. Provision is most effective at Key Stage 3 where appropriate teaching materials are used.
- At Key Stage 4 provision is satisfactory with all students undertaking a core GCSE ICT course; however, students' appreciation of e-safety is not significantly developed beyond their Key Stage 3 understanding.
- There is no systematic provision in the sixth form, although students who take the GCE Applied ICT course do cover aspects of law, data security and general e-safety.
- The safe use of new technology has been reinforced this year for all students through presentations in two school assemblies.
- The delivery of the e-safety curriculum is focused on ICT lessons rather than across the curriculum, although school rules on internet usage are consistently enforced.
- Acceptable use contracts, which reinforce the rules on e-safety, are signed by all students joining the school.

Leadership and management

The Leadership and Management of e-safety are good.

- Senior staff, members of the ICT department and network management have a good awareness of e-safety. They have rigorous systems and procedures in place to monitor network usage and quickly intervene if necessary to enforce the school rules and to ensure students are safe within the school.
- Policies and procedures for e-safety are all in place and have been subject to systematic review.
- Systems are tight and secure. All teaching and support staff have an understanding of the systems for the safe use of ICT; monitoring systems are effective and data is used systematically to inform pastoral and senior staff of potential risks and thus to intervene where necessary.

- The school is proactive in ensuring good support to vulnerable students through regular reviews of network records to ensure they are not a risk from bullying or inappropriate communications.
- Local authority e-safety courses have been advertised to parents; however, the school recognises the need to further engage parents in issues of technological safety in the home.

Quality of training

The quality of training is satisfactory.

- Procedures are in place to ensure all staff receive annual safeguarding training, which include elements of e-safety, disclosure and anti-bullying guidance. Some staff have received more specialist training; ICT staff and network managers have a good understanding of the issues which arise in e-safety. Formal training systems to ensure that there are similar levels of awareness amongst all support are not yet in place.
- Further training is planned for 2009/10; however, there remains a considerable gulf between the knowledge of students and the understanding of non specialist staff.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to incorporate e-safety in to schemes of work across the curriculum
- ensuring teaching reflects students' prior knowledge and understanding and meets their needs
- development of an age differentiated curriculum to ensure all students receive appropriate and up to date advice, in particular at post-16
- the delivery of a consistent staff training programme on e-safety, in order to ensure all staff have a secure understanding of the risks involved in using new technologies.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop e-safety 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

Paul Lowery
Additional Inspector