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Dear Mrs Donkin

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 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 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; observation of 10 part lessons (eight of which were joint observations);
and a tour of the school with students.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement in ICT

Students' achievement in ICT is inadequate.

■ Students enter the school with levels of attainment in ICT which are
broadly in line with the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4,
students who study ICT GCSE reach levels of attainment which are
significantly higher than the national average. These students make
outstanding progress. The large majority of students who study the
vocational ICT course make good progress but the higher-attaining
students do not do as well. However, the large majority of students study

only core ICT. These students, over the past three years, have made inadequate progress. Therefore, overall the progress made by students between Year 7 and Year 11 is inadequate.

- In the sixth form students studying ICT make satisfactory progress.

- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons. These students are confident about using ICT and it is supporting them to make at least good and in some cases outstanding progress.

- Students behaved well in the lessons seen. There were good working relationships between staff and students. Students worked well together and they treated each other, the staff and the equipment with respect.

- Students have an adequate knowledge of how to keep themselves safe when using new technologies. This knowledge is developed through ICT lessons, assemblies and personal, social, health education lessons.

Quality of teaching

Quality of teaching in ICT is satisfactory

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their lessons are planned well. In the lessons seen, teachers used a variety of resources to engage and motivate the students. However, in too many of the lessons the students were all asked to complete the same task. Some students finished the task early and others were not able to complete it. The identical tasks set for all students contributed to them making satisfactory rather than good progress in lessons.

- In some lessons, the questions the members of staff asked challenged the students to think about why they did what they did. However, often questions were narrowly focused and members of staff did not encourage the students to extend their thinking.

- In one ICT GCSE lesson, the ICT was used very effectively to develop the students' learning. Students had to produce a movie clip and a sound monitor to demonstrate the different input and output devices for a computer. The use of movies and sound motivated the students and, by the end of the lesson, they had made good progress.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate.

- Although all students receive their statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum, certain aspects, for example, data logging at Key Stage 3 and

programming at Key Stage 4 are weaker than other aspects, such as communication and presenting information.

■ However, the large majority of students studying core ICT have insufficient time to complete their qualification which is contributing significantly to the inadequate progress which they make.

■ In the sixth form, the A level offered meets the needs and interests of the students. The increased numbers studying ICT in the sixth form, and in particular the increased number of girls, shows that the curriculum is appropriate. It also shows that the practices put in place to increase the number of girls studying ICT have worked.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is satisfactory.

■ You have provided a wide range of ICT training for all staff. This has included e-safety, use of the virtual learning environment and use of software. This training is appreciated by staff who are able to use ICT confidently. The training the teaching assistants have received is enabling them to support students particularly well. You have also provided training for parents on the use of new technologies and this has been gratefully received.

■ Over the past three years, the ICT team has systematically tackled some of the weaknesses you and the team have identified. These improvements, including re-writing the Key Stage 3 curriculum to make it more appropriate to the students' needs and interests, have enabled some students to make better progress in ICT.

The use of ICT across the curriculum

The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory.

■ There is much use of ICT across the curriculum. For example, in mathematics and science, some students are able to use data loggers to measure and then analyse the data obtained. In music, they develop their editing and composing skills using ICT.

■ However, the use of ICT across the school is not coordinated. The work completed in ICT is not shared with other subjects. Therefore, students can repeat the work they have done in ICT in other subjects. Equally, the ICT work completed in other subjects is not assessed according to ICT criteria and is not passed to the ICT department. Therefore, there is an inaccurate view of the students' overall ICT ability. You have recognised this and appointed a coordinator for ICT across the school. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this initiative.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all students make at least satisfactory progress in ICT between Year 7 and Year 11

- developing teaching through the use of:

    - different materials appropriate to each student's needs
    - questioning techniques
- providing a curriculum which:

    - has a more equal emphasis on all aspects of the National Curriculum
    - enables the students to make at least satisfactory progress
- coordinating the use of ICT across the school so that there is an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the students' overall ICT ability.

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