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Dear Father Briody

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 12 and 13 May 2011 to look at work in ICT.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons including two observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

■ Students begin in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are slightly below the national average. All students study ICT until the end of Year 11 and take a qualification. By the end of year 11, they are achieving above national averages.

■ Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well and have excellent access to facilities. High-quality support means that these students make good progress.

■ Students behave well in lessons. They listen to each other and work well either in groups or independently. The excellent relationships between staff and students when using ICT support good progress in lessons.

- Students are supported to learn how to become safe and responsible users of new technologies through tutor time and assemblies, at times led by the on-site safer schools police officer.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Teachers plan lessons which engage and motivate students. Staff have good subject knowledge and are confident users of ICT. They have high expectations of the students.

- Teachers form very positive working relationships, which challenge and engage students in their learning.

- The assessment of work in lessons is excellent and is used effectively to target interventions with students who underachieve. Students are aware of their progress and know what they need to do to improve their work.

- The use of ICT to support learning across the school is good and improving. Students have very good access to ICT and it is used appropriately in many lessons to develop their learning, although progress in ICT across the curriculum is not monitored.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- All students at Key Stages 3 and 4 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. The curriculum is planned well and reviewed regularly and has been updated to make it more interesting and enjoyable. The college has recently introduced a gaming skills course in Year 9 to increase the challenge for students.

- The college recognises that the curriculum provided at Key Stage 4 does not always challenge the most able students and has plans to introduce more appropriate accreditation for these students.

- The college has well-developed plans to replace the current virtual learning environment (VLE) to enable better access for students.

- Students have access to very high quality opportunities to use ICT in other curriculum areas. Opportunities to use their skills in a number of enterprise activities, several of which have won national recognition, demonstrate what some students can achieve. However, this work is not currently monitored or assessed, and some students are receiving broader experiences in ICT than others.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is outstanding.

- ICT is led very well at both departmental and senior management levels. Significant progress to improve the outcomes for all students in ICT has been made in the last three years. The leadership team has a clear and

shared understanding of both strengths and areas for further development. The standard of self-review and evaluation is outstanding. Members of the governing body are actively involved in monitoring the progress of students in ICT and in ensuring that it provides value for money.

■ Access to ICT equipment in the college is excellent. The college provides regular opportunities for student support at lunchtime clubs and Easter revision sessions, and has further plans to offer access at the breakfast club.

■ The use of data to raise standards and improve provision is excellent. The use of targeted interventions and additional support is having a significant impact on students' achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

■ improving the quality of students' learning and their progress in ICT throughout the school by sharing best practice, in particular in using assessment information to enable differentiated activities in lessons

■ developing the VLE to enable students to have better online access to curriculum resources

■ further developing the curriculum to ensure that the use of ICT in other subjects is monitored and its impact known.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

David Brown
Additional Inspector