Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Survey Visits

Generic grade descriptors and supplementary subject-specific guidance for inspectors on making judgements during visits to schools

Subject feedback letters, following survey visits, normally contain separate judgements on:

- achievement
- quality of teaching
- quality of the curriculum
- effectiveness of leadership and management
- overall effectiveness in the subject.

In coming to these judgements, inspectors will use the relevant criteria and grade descriptors from the 2009 Section 5 evaluation schedule (up-dated in September 2010), as they can be applied to individual subjects. These descriptors are set out in the left-hand columns in the following pages. Alongside them (for achievement, teaching, the curriculum and leadership and management) are supplementary, subject-specific descriptors which provide additional guidance for ICT. These descriptors should be applied in a way which is appropriate to the age of pupils involved. Except where otherwise indicated, descriptors are intended to used on a 'best fit' basis.

It is important to note that this guidance is intended only to inform the judgements made by specialist inspectors carrying out subject survey visits. It is not for use on Section 5 whole-school inspections.

Achievement in ICT

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	## Outstanding Achievement is likely to be outstanding when: - attainment is above average or high and learning and progress are outstanding or - attainment is high and learning and progress are good	Pupils show exceptional independence and discernment in their use of ICT. They are able to think for themselves and take the initiative in, for example, asking questions, carrying out their own investigations and in working constructively with others. They show significant levels of originality, imagination or creativity in their understanding and skills within the subject. Appropriate to their age and ability, they make highly effective use of a wide range of equipment and software. Their knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using new technologies is extremely thorough and comprehensive. They are highly enthusiastic about using ICT.
2	## Good Achievement is likely to be good when: - attainment is above average and learning and progress are good or - attainment is average and learning and progress are good or outstanding. or - attainment is low but there is convincing evidence that outstanding learning and progress are helping pupils' attainment to improve strongly. On rare occasions learning and progress may be good, but outstanding for some groups of pupils and improving overall.	Pupils are able to work independently when given the opportunity, taking the initiative in their work and when working with others. They demonstrate some originality, imagination or creativity in their work. Appropriate to their age and ability, they make good use of a wide range of equipment and software. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using new technologies. They enjoy the subject and can explain its value.
3	## Satisfactory Achievement is likely to be satisfactory when: - attainment is average, above average or high and learning and progress are satisfactory or - attainment is low but improving strongly and learning and progress are good. Or, there is convincing evidence that learning and progress are satisfactory but improving securely and quickly.	Pupils are generally dependent on their teachers but can occasionally work independently and take the initiative in developing their work. Occasionally pupils show creative or original responses in their subject work. They may make good use of some aspects of ICT, for example to communicate and present ideas, but their capability in other areas such as data logging and programming/sequencing/control is patchy and no better than satisfactory. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using new technologies. They are generally interested in the subject.
4	## Inadequate Achievement is likely to be inadequate if either: - learning and progress are inadequate or - attainment is low and shows little sign of improvement, and learning and progress are no better than satisfactory with little or no evidence of improvement.	Pupils rarely show the ability to work independently or take the initiative in their work. They rarely demonstrate creativity or originality in their use of ICT. Whilst some aspects of ICT may be satisfactory, pupils make little progress in others. In secondary schools, significant proportions of students in KS4 neither study ICT nor develop their skills systematically through other subjects. Pupils have poor knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using new technologies. They lack interest and enthusiasm for the subject.

Quality of teaching in ICT

1	Teaching in the subject is at least good and much is outstanding, with the result that the pupils are making exceptional progress. It is highly effective in inspiring pupils and ensuring that they learn extremely well. Excellent subject knowledge is applied consistently to challenge and inspire pupils. Resources, including new technology, make a marked contribution to the quality of learning, as does the precisely targeted support provided by other adults. Teachers and other adults are acutely aware of their pupils' capabilities and of their prior learning and understanding, and plan very effectively to build on these. Marking and dialogue between teachers, other adults and pupils are consistently of a very high quality. Pupils understand in detail how to improve their work and are consistently supported in doing so. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with striking impact on the quality of learning.	Teachers of ICT communicate high expectations, enthusiasm and passion about their subject to pupils. They have a high level of confidence and expertise, both in terms of their specialist knowledge and technical skills and their understanding of effective learning in the subject. As a result, they use a very wide range of innovative and imaginative resources and teaching strategies to stimulate pupils' active participation in their learning and secure outstanding progress across all aspects of the subject.
2	Teaching in the subject is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are motivated and engaged. The great majority of teaching is securing good progress and learning. Teachers generally have strong subject knowledge which enthuses and challenges most pupils and contributes to their good progress. Good and imaginative use is made of resources, including new technology to enhance learning. Other adults' support is well focused and makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning. As a result of good assessment procedures, teachers and other adults plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils are provided with detailed feedback, both orally and through marking. They know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to sustain good progress. Teachers listen to, observe and question groups of pupils during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning.	Teachers of ICT have a clear understanding of the value of their subject which they communicate effectively to pupils. They have a confident level of specialist expertise, including good technical skills, which they use well in planning and teaching their subject. As a result, they use an appropriate range of resources and teaching strategies to promote good learning across all aspects of the subject.
3	Teaching in the subject may be good in some respects and there are no endemic inadequacies. Pupils show interest in their work and are making progress that is broadly in line with their capabilities. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Adequate use is made of a range of resources, including new technology, to support learning. Support provided by other adults is effectively deployed. Teaching ensures that pupils are generally engaged by their work and little time is wasted. Regular and accurate assessment informs planning, which generally meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Pupils are informed about their progress and how to improve through marking and dialogue with adults. Teachers monitor pupils' work during lessons, pick up general misconceptions and adjust their plans accordingly to support learning.	Teachers of ICT understand how to maintain pupils' interest in the subject. They have a sound level of subject expertise which they use in their planning and teaching. As a result, they use a range of resources and teaching strategies to promote a satisfactory level of learning across most aspects of the subject.
4	■ Expectations in the subject are inappropriate. Too many lessons are barely satisfactory or are inadequate and teaching fails to promote the pupils' learning, progress or enjoyment. or ■ Assessment in the subject takes too little account of the pupils' prior learning or their understanding of tasks and is not used effectively to help them improve.	Teachers of ICT are not able to engage pupils' interest in the subject. Their subject expertise is limited and, as a result, they do not provide the resources or teaching strategies to promote effective subject learning.

The curriculum in ICT

1	The curriculum in the subject provides memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high-quality learning and wider personal development. The subject curriculum may be at the forefront of successful, innovative design. A curriculum with overall breadth and balance provides pupils with their full entitlement and is customised to meet the changing needs of individuals and groups. The subject's contribution to relevant cross-curricular themes including, as appropriate, literacy, numeracy and ICT, is mainly outstanding. As a result, all groups of pupils benefit from a highly coherent and relevant curriculum which promotes outstanding outcomes.	The imaginative and stimulating subject curriculum is skilfully designed to match to the full range of pupils' needs and to ensure highly effective continuity and progression in their learning. All strands of the statutory ICT National Curriculum are covered extremely well for all pupils, in ICT lessons or in a planned and monitored way across the school curriculum. Pupils are able to use their ICT skills in realistic and challenging situations. Excellent links are forged with other agencies and the wider community to provide a wide range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and engagement with the subject. Students in KS4 have access to a wide range of appropriate ICT qualifications, including vocational options.
2	The curriculum in the subject provides well-organised, imaginative and effective opportunities for learning and a broad range of experiences which contribute well to the pupils' development. The curriculum is adjusted effectively to meet the needs of most groups and a range of pupils with highly specific needs. The subject makes a good contribution to relevant cross-curricular themes including, as appropriate, literacy, numeracy and ICT. Enrichment opportunities in the subject are varied, have a high take-up and are much enjoyed.	The curriculum is broad, balanced and well informed by current initiatives in the subject. It is designed to match to the large majority of pupils' needs and ensure effective continuity and progression in their learning in the subject. All strands of the statutory ICT National Curriculum receive good coverage for all pupils, in ICT lessons or across other subjects. Pupils are able to use most of their ICT skills in realistic situations. Good links are forged with other agencies and the wider community to provide a range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and their engagement with the subject.
3	The curriculum in the subject is adequately matched to pupils' needs, interests and aspirations and provides adequate preparation for the next stage of their lives, whatever their starting points. Provision for potentially vulnerable pupils is satisfactory. The subject's contribution to cross-curricular themes including, as appropriate, literacy, numeracy and ICT, is at least satisfactory.	The curriculum secures the pupils' broad and balanced entitlement in the subject and meets any statutory requirements which apply. It provides for a range of pupils' needs and ensures they make satisfactory progress in their learning. All pupils experience all strands of the statutory ICT National Curriculum, though some strands, such as data logging and programming/sequencing/control may receive limited attention. Pupils are able to use some of their ICT skills in realistic situations. Some links are forged with other agencies and the wider community, although the range of activity provided to enrich pupils' interest and learning may be quite limited.
4	The curriculum has significant shortcomings in meeting the needs of pupils, or particular groups of pupils, and makes insufficient contribution to their learning, enjoyment or development.	The curriculum does not ensure pupils' entitlement to the subject and does not secure continuity in their learning. There are significant deficiencies in the provision of some strands of the statutory ICT National Curriculum, or significant proportions of pupils do not receive any ICT provision, either discrete or cross-curricular. There is little by way of enrichment activity in the subject.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

1	Subject and senior leaders and managers are conspicuously successful in establishing a strong sense of purpose which involves work towards meeting or sustaining ambitious targets in the subject for all pupils. Morale is very high and belief in success runs through all staff involved with the subject. Rigorous and extensive monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge lead to exceptionally well-focused plans for the subject. Actions taken are implemented with precision and managed thoroughly. As a result, the quality of teaching in the subject is at least good and leaders and managers at all levels are taking highly effective steps to drive up the quality of teaching still further. Consequently, achievement in the subject for all pupils is at least good.	Leadership is informed by a high level of subject expertise and vision. There is a strong track record of innovation. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are well-informed by current best practice in the subject and in education generally. Subject leadership inspires confidence and whole-hearted commitment from pupils and colleagues. There are effective strategies to delegate subject responsibilities where appropriate and to share good practice and secure high quality professional development in the subject. The subject has a very high profile in the life of the school and is at the cutting edge of initiatives within the school. Access to ICT equipment is outstanding, and the school is likely to have promoted the use of mobile technologies. The school has a virtual learning environment (VLE), which gives pupils and staff very good access to their work and to the school's learning resources at all times, and has a significant impact on pupils' achievement.
2	Subject and senior leaders and managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff about securing improvement in the subject. They galvanise the enthusiasm of staff and channel their efforts to good effect. Leaders and managers routinely make good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities relating to teaching, other provision and outcomes. They have an accurate picture and understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Planning is founded on robust evidence and good-quality data. It is tackling key areas of weakness, including those in teaching, systematically and building on areas of strength. As a result, teaching is at least satisfactory and improving. Target-setting is realistic and challenging. Consequently, achievement in the subject is generally good, or there is substantial evidence that it is improving strongly.	Leadership is well-informed by current developments in the subject. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are clearly focused on raising attainment and improving the provision for the subject. There is a shared common purpose amongst those involved in teaching the subject with good opportunities to share practice and access subject training. The subject reflects wider whole school priorities and has a prominent profile in the school. Access to ICT equipment is good for all pupils and teachers. The ICT infrastructure (which could include a VLE) provides pupils and staff good access to their work and to the school's learning resources, and contributes to pupils' achievement.
3	Subject and senior leaders and managers are motivated to seek further improvement and are effective in focusing efforts on priorities in the subject. They monitor accurately the progress of all pupils and the quality of teaching and learning. Self evaluation is broadly accurate. Target-setting in the subject is based on accurate assessment information but is only adequately challenging. Suitable plans are in place aimed at improving areas of weakness in the subject and effective steps are being taken to secure high-quality teaching. Expectations are sufficiently high to bring about outcomes which are broadly satisfactory and improving or, if lower, there is substantial evidence that they are improving strongly.	Leadership is aware of current developments in the subject and incorporates these within its practice. Provision for the subject is monitored and reviewed regularly and there is a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. There is some sharing of good practice, with modest access to subject-specific professional development. Access to ICT equipment is satisfactory, with pupils able to use it for the majority of the time they need it. Schools will have ICT suites which are book-able, but equipment does not lend itself to more flexible use.
4	■ Subject and senior leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to embed their ambition for the subject. or ■ Target-setting in the subject is not used effectively to raise expectations and improve outcomes. or ■ Subject and senior leaders and managers do not drive and secure improvement. or ■ Subject and senior leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to secure satisfactory and better teaching.	Leadership is not well-informed about current initiatives in the subject. Key statutory requirements for the subject are not met. Self-evaluation is weak and not informed by good practice in the subject. Opportunities for professional development in the subject are limited and, as a result, some staff lack the confidence and expertise to deliver it effectively. The subject has a low profile in the life of the school. Pupils and staff have only limited access to ICT equipment when they need it.

Overall effectiveness in ICT

Outstanding (1)	Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be outstanding when:
	Achievement in the subject is outstanding, or achievement is good and outstanding leadership and management underpin the capacity for sustained improvement in the subject. At least one, of teaching or the curriculum in the subject, is outstanding, and neither is less than good.
Good (2)	Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be good when:
	Achievement in the subject is good, and good leadership and management provide secure evidence of capacity for sustained improvement in the subject. In exceptional circumstances, leadership and management may be satisfactory. At least one, of teaching or the curriculum in the subject, is good, and neither is less than satisfactory.
Satisfactory (3)	Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be satisfactory when:
	Achievement in the subject is at least satisfactory, and satisfactory leadership and management ensure adequate capacity for improvement in the subject. Teaching and the curriculum in the subject are at least satisfactory.
Inadequate (4)	Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following are inadequate:
	■ Achievement in the subject ■ Capacity for improvement, as evidenced by inadequate leadership and management of the subject ■ Teaching or the curriculum in the subject