

Information and 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:

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

In coming to these judgements, inspectors will use the relevant criteria and grade descriptors from the 2012 Section 5 evaluation schedule as they can be applied to individual subjects. Key elements of these descriptors are set out in the left-hand columns in the following pages though inspectors may refer to the whole section 5 evaluation schedule where appropriate. 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 be 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.

Grade descriptors:¹ achievement of pupils in ICT

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>Almost all pupils, including, where applicable, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are making rapid and sustained progress in the subject over time given their starting points. They learn exceptionally well and as a result acquire knowledge quickly and in depth, including in the sixth form and areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They develop and apply a wide range of skills to great effect, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills that will ensure they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of almost all groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages for all pupils with many above average. In exceptional circumstances, where standards of attainment of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gap is closing dramatically over a period of time.</p>	<p>Pupils show exceptional independence and discernment in their use of ICT across all strands of the subject. They understand important concepts and are able to make connections within the subject because they have highly developed transferable knowledge, skills and understanding. They are able to think for themselves and take the initiative in, for example, asking questions, carrying out their own investigations and 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. They are highly enthusiastic about using ICT.</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>Pupils are making better progress than all pupils nationally in the subject given their starting points. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are also making better progress than similar groups of pupils nationally. Pupils acquire knowledge quickly and are secure in their understanding of the subject. They develop and apply a range of skills well, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills that will ensure they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of the large majority of groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages for all pupils. Where standards of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gaps are closing. In exceptional circumstances, where attainment is low overall, it is improving at a faster rate than nationally over a sustained period.</p>	<p>Pupils are able to work independently when given the opportunity, taking the initiative in their work and when working with others. Pupils understand most important concepts and can make connections within ICT. They demonstrate achievement across all strands of ICT and show originality, imagination and creativity in their work. Appropriate to their age and ability, they make good use of a wide range of equipment and software. They enjoy the subject and can explain its value.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Pupils are progressing at least as well in the subject as all pupils nationally given their starting points. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are also making progress in line with similar groups of pupils nationally. Pupils generally learn well in the subject, with no major weaknesses. They acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills, including those in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that will ensure they are prepared adequately for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of the majority of groups of pupils are likely to be in line with national averages for all pupils. Where standards of groups of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gaps are closing overall. In exceptional circumstances, where attainment is low overall, it is improving over a sustained period.</p>	<p>Pupils are generally dependent on their teachers but can work independently and take the initiative in developing their work. Pupils use techniques correctly, often through emulating the teacher's methods, but their understanding of the underpinning concepts is insecure. 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. They can take the initiative in developing their work when allowed. Occasionally pupils show creative or original responses in their subject work. They are generally interested in the subject.</p>
4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>Achievement in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pupils' learning and progress, or the learning and 	<p>Pupils rarely show the ability to work independently or take the initiative in their work. Pupils' lack of understanding impedes progress. They develop insufficient skills in using and applying ICT. They rarely demonstrate creativity or originality in their use of ICT. Whilst some aspects of ICT</p>

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	<p>progress of particular groups, is consistently below those of all pupils nationally given their starting point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning and progress in any key stage, including the sixth form, lead to underachievement. ■ The learning, quality of work and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs show that this group is underachieving. ■ Pupils' communication skills, including in reading and writing and proficiency in mathematics overall, or those of particular groups, are not sufficient for the next stage of education or training. ■ Attainment is consistently low showing little, fragile or inconsistent improvement, or is in decline. ■ There are wide gaps in attainment and in learning and progress between different groups of pupils and of all pupils nationally that are showing little sign of closing or are widening. 	<p>may be satisfactory, pupils make little progress in others. They rarely demonstrate creativity in the way they tackle work but seem confined to following instructions. In secondary schools, significant proportions of students in KS4 and KS5 neither study ICT nor develop their skills systematically through other subjects. They lack interest and enthusiasm for the subject.</p>
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Grade descriptors:² the quality of teaching in ICT³

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>Much of the teaching in the subject is outstanding and never less than consistently good. As a result, almost all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. All teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. Drawing on excellent subject knowledge, teachers plan astutely and set challenging tasks based on systematic, accurate assessment of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding. They use well judged and often imaginative teaching strategies that, together with sharply focused and timely support and intervention, match individual needs accurately. Consequently, pupils learn exceptionally well. Teaching promotes pupils' high levels of resilience, confidence and independence when they tackle challenging activities. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with notable impact on the quality of learning. Time is used very well and every opportunity is taken to successfully develop crucial skills, including being able to use their literacy and numeracy skills. Appropriate and regular homework contributes very well to pupils' learning. Marking and constructive feedback from teachers and pupils are frequent and of a consistently high quality, leading to high levels of engagement and interest.</p>	<p>Teachers of ICT communicate high expectations, enthusiasm and passion about their subject to pupils. Teaching is rooted in the development of all pupils' understanding of important concepts and progression within the lesson and over time. It enables pupils to make connections between topics and see the 'big picture'. Teachers have a high level of competence and expertise, both in terms of their specialist knowledge and technical skills and in their understanding of effective learning in ICT. Their responses to pupils' questions are accurate and effective at stimulating further thought. They plan lessons specifically to address possible errors and misconceptions. Teachers 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.</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>As a result of teaching that is mainly good, with examples of outstanding teaching, most pupils and groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are achieving well in the subject over time. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Teachers use their well developed subject knowledge and their accurate assessment of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding to plan effectively and set challenging tasks. They use effective teaching strategies that, together with appropriately targeted support and intervention, match most pupils' individual needs so that pupils learn well. Teaching generally promotes pupils' resilience, confidence and independence when tackling challenging activities.</p>	<p>Teachers of ICT have a clear understanding of the value of their subject which they communicate effectively to pupils. Teaching develops pupils' understanding of important concepts as well as their proficiency in techniques and recall of knowledge, equipping pupils to work independently. Teachers use a range of contexts to exemplify the value of ICT and to relate it to pupils' lives and its impact on society. They have a good level of specialist expertise, including good technical skills, which they use well in planning and teaching their subject. They respond well to pupils' questions through effective dialogue and feedback, and correct errors and misconceptions. They use an appropriate range of resources and teaching strategies to promote good learning across all aspects of the subject.</p>

² Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

³ These grade descriptors describe the quality of teaching in the subject taking account of evidence over time. While they include some characteristics of individual lessons, they are not designed to be used to judge individual lessons.

	<p>Teachers regularly listen astutely to, carefully observe and skilfully question groups of pupils and individuals during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. Teaching consistently deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding and teaches them a range of skills including literacy and numeracy skills. Appropriate and regular homework contributes well to pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately and discuss assessments with them so that pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Teaching results in most pupils, and groups of pupils, currently in the school making progress in the subject broadly in line with that made by pupils nationally with similar starting points. There is likely to be some good teaching and there are no endemic inadequacies across year groups or for particular groups of pupils. Teachers' expectations enable most pupils to work hard and achieve satisfactorily and encourage them to make progress. Due attention is often given to the careful assessment of pupils' learning but this is not always conducted rigorously enough and may result in some unnecessary repetition of work for pupils and tasks being planned and set that do not fully challenge. Teachers monitor pupils' work during lessons, picking up any general misconceptions and adjust their plans accordingly to support learning. These adaptations are usually successful but occasionally are not timely or relevant and this slows learning for some pupils. Teaching strategies ensure that the individual needs of pupils are usually met. Teachers carefully deploy any available additional support and set appropriate homework and these contribute reasonably well to the quality of learning for pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils are informed about the progress they are making and how to improve further through marking and dialogue with adults that is usually timely and encouraging. This approach ensures that most pupils want to work hard and improve.</p>	<p>Teachers of ICT understand how to maintain pupils' interest in the subject. Teaching focuses primarily on developing pupils' skills in mastering techniques and answering routine questions rather than understanding the underlying concepts of the subject.</p> <p>The context of ICT lessons is related to pupils' lives and the relevance of ICT is made apparent. Teachers have a satisfactory level of subject expertise which they use in their planning and teaching and to correct common errors and misconceptions. They give satisfactory responses to pupils' questions and use a range of resources and teaching strategies to promote a satisfactory level of learning across most aspects of the subject.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>Teaching in the subject is likely to be inadequate where any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As a result of weak teaching, pupils or groups of pupils currently in the school are making inadequate progress. ■ Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations and teaching over time fails to excite, enthuse, engage or motivate particular groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. ■ Pupils cannot communicate, read, write or use mathematics as well as they should, as appropriate, in the subject. ■ Learning activities are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of pupils so that they make inadequate progress. 	<p>Teachers of ICT are not able to engage pupils' interest in the subject and do not monitor their progress adequately. Weaknesses and gaps in the teacher's knowledge of ICT or how pupils learn the subject hamper lesson planning, the choice of resources, or the quality of teachers' explanations with the result that pupils make too little progress. The context of ICT lessons is not often related to pupils' lives and the relevance of ICT is not made apparent. Teachers have low expectations of pupils' engagement with ICT. Pupils' are often passive and there is little opportunity for them to contribute their own understanding and ideas to the lesson. Teachers do not correct common errors or misconceptions or provide the resources or teaching strategies to promote effective subject learning.</p>

Grade descriptors: the curriculum in ICT⁴

	Generic ⁵	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject provides highly positive, memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning, has a very positive impact on pupils' behaviour and, where appropriate, their safety, and contributes very well to pupils' achievement and, where appropriate, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>	<p>The imaginative and stimulating ICT curriculum is very 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 across the school curriculum. Pupils are able to use their ICT knowledge, skills and understanding in realistic and challenging situations. The contexts in which ICT is taught are both relevant to pupils' lives and also reflect current ICT from the world of industry. 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. These include ICT-based clubs and visits to sites where ICT is at the heart of activities. Students in KS4 and KS5 have access to a wide range of appropriate ICT qualifications, including academic and vocational options. Their knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe when using new technologies is extremely comprehensive.</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject provides well organised, imaginative and effective opportunities for learning for all groups of pupils including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, promotes positive behaviour and, where appropriate, their safety, and provides a broad range of experiences that contribute well to the pupils' achievement and, where appropriate, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>	<p>The ICT curriculum is broad, balanced and well informed by current initiatives in the subject. It matches well the needs of the large majority of pupils and ensures 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. The contexts in which ICT is taught are both relevant to pupils' lives and also reflect current practice in ICT from the world of industry. 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. Students in KS4 and KS5 have access to appropriate ICT qualifications. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe when using new technologies.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject is generally matched to pupils' needs, interests and aspirations and provides adequate preparation for the next stage of their lives, whatever their starting points.</p>	<p>The ICT curriculum secures the pupils' broad and balanced entitlement in the subject and meets statutory requirements. 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 activities provided to enrich pupils' interest and learning are limited in range. Students in KS4 and KS5 have access to an appropriate but limited range of ICT qualifications. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe when using new technologies.</p>
4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>The curriculum in the subject fails to meet the needs of pupils or particular groups of pupils.</p>	<p>The ICT curriculum does not ensure pupils' receive their full entitlement in the subject or 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 discretely or through appropriate cross-curricular provision. There is little enrichment activity in the subject. Connections between the ICT experiences provided and the lives of pupils are weak. This results in low levels of engagement and enjoyment. Pupils have poor knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe when using new technologies.</p>

⁴ The generic grade descriptors are drawn from the leadership and management section of *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of schools and academies, January 2012*

Grade descriptors:⁶ quality of leadership and management of ICT

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>The pursuit of excellence in all activities relating to the subject is demonstrated by an uncompromising and highly successful drive to strongly improve achievement, or maintain the highest levels of achievement, for all pupils including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, over a sustained period of time. Actions are based on a deep and accurate understanding of performance in the subject. Key leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, resulting in teaching that is likely to be outstanding and at least consistently good.</p>	<p>Leadership is informed by a high level of subject expertise and vision which has a clear impact on the performance and practice of members of the department. There is a strong track record of innovation in ICT. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are well-informed by current best practice in the subject. 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. Continuing professional development is well-targeted its impact on the quality of provision and achievement evaluated thoroughly. 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 ICT infrastructure enables pupils and staff to have very good access to their work and to the school's learning resources at all times, and contributes to pupils' achievement..</p>
2	<p>Good</p> <p>Key leaders and managers consistently communicate high expectations and ambition in the subject. They model good practice and demonstrably work to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and channelling their efforts and skills to good effect. As a result, teaching is improving and is at least satisfactory, with much that is good. Planned actions based on accurate self-evaluation to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective. As a result, achievement has improved or consolidated previous good performance.</p>	<p>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 enables pupils and staff to have good access to their work and to the school's learning resources, and contributes to pupils' achievement.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Key leaders and managers provide a concerted approach to improvement in the subject. Planned actions by leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching so that very little is inadequate. Capacity to secure improvements in the subject is demonstrated by a trend of sustained improvement in achievement although a few significant weaknesses remain.</p>	<p>Leadership is aware of current developments in the subject and incorporates these within its practice with some success. Provision for the subject is monitored and reviewed regularly and there is a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. There is some sharing of good practice, but access to subject-specific professional development has been limited. Access to ICT equipment is satisfactory, with pupils able to use it for the majority of the time they need it. Teachers of other subjects have access to ICT suites but equipment does not lend itself to more flexible use.</p>
4	<p>Inadequate</p> <p>Leadership and management of the subject are likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Capacity for further improvement is limited because current leaders and managers have been ineffective in securing essential improvements. ■ Leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to secure satisfactory and better teaching for all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. ■ Despite remedying a few small areas of weakness, perhaps recently, improvements are fragile, too slow or depend on external support. 	<p>Leadership is not well-informed about current initiatives in the subject. There is little evidence of a broader vision of ICT education that draws on the work of other professionals beyond the school. Key statutory requirements for the subject are not met. Self-evaluation and improvement planning are 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 ICT effectively. The subject has a low profile in the life of the school and does not contribute to whole school improvements. Pupils and staff have only limited access to ICT equipment when they need it.</p>

⁶ Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

Grade descriptors:⁷ the overall effectiveness of ICT

Outstanding (1)	Practice in the subject consistently reflects the highest aspirations for pupils and expectations of staff. Best practice is spread effectively in a drive for continuous improvement. Teaching in the subject is likely to be outstanding and together with a rich curriculum, which is highly relevant to pupils' needs, it contributes to outstanding learning and achievement or, in exceptional circumstances, achievement that is good and rapidly improving. Thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the subject enables them to thrive. Consequently, pupils and groups of pupils have excellent experiences in the subject, ensuring they are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Good (2)	Effective action is taken in the subject to enable most pupils to reach their potential. Pupils benefit from teaching that is at least good. This promotes very positive attitudes to learning and ensures that achievement in the subject is at least good. Leadership and management of the subject play a significant role in this and are good overall. Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A positive climate for learning exists and pupils and groups of pupils have highly positive experiences in the subject so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
Satisfactory (3)	Achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management of the subject are all likely to be at least satisfactory with some significant good practice. Reasonable steps are taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and groups of pupils have a generally positive experience in the subject and are not disadvantaged as they move to the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Inadequate (4)	Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Achievement is inadequate.■ The quality of teaching is inadequate.■ The curriculum is inadequate.■ Leadership and management are inadequate.■ There are important weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development resulting in a poor climate for learning in the subject where pupils or groups of pupils are unable to thrive.

⁷ Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.