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Mrs A Barney  
Headteacher  
Great Bardfield Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Barney

**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 pupils, during my visit on 7 November 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six lessons, including two which were observed jointly with you and the ICT coordinator.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

**Achievement in ICT**

Achievement in ICT is good.

- For a number of years, pupils in Year 6 have achieved above national averages by the time they leave school. Currently, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 3 and 4 are attaining well above average standards. The youngest children have particularly well-developed skills in using digital media such as cameras and recorders. Progress is good across the school, especially in some areas of the ICT programme of study that are often difficult to achieve well, such as programming and control. Year 6 pupils presently have weaknesses in areas, such as databases and spreadsheets, which the school has identified and is addressing. These older pupils are reflective and analytical about their ICT achievements; they self-evaluate accurately and honestly in a desire to do well.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to achieve well. Some outstanding differentiation in teaching means that they and the gifted and talented make good progress.
- Pupils are taught how to become safe and responsible users of new technologies through modules in the ICT curriculum. The impact of this teaching on the pupils' understanding of e-safety is satisfactory.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is mostly exemplary. Pupils respect the views of each other and adults and respond very well to the tasks they are given. They listen to each other and work well together showing enjoyment in what they are doing. The relationships between staff and pupils when using ICT are often excellent.

### **Quality of teaching in ICT**

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- Teaching has many good features. Most teachers are confident and competent in teaching ICT and in using technology. Teaching focuses well on developing pupils' ICT skills; it is less well focused on developing their understanding of key ICT concepts. However, teachers make excellent links across a commercial suite of programmes and take opportunities well to develop pupils' literacy and other subject knowledge through ICT lessons.
- Many teachers have good subject knowledge which allows them to pose challenging questions and answer pupils' questions accurately. They use ICT to enhance the teaching of other subjects, for example in PE and mathematics, and do so well using good presentations to engage the pupils.
- The assessment of work is good and assessment for learning is done well during lessons. The end of module assessments are mainly skills based and should be improved further by testing pupils' knowledge and understanding.

### **Quality of the curriculum in ICT**

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- The curriculum is well thought out and carefully planned, fully meeting the pupils' needs. It is interesting and engaging and builds well on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, often taking into account the skills pupils bring with them from their home use of ICT. It is an up-to-date curriculum that includes work on e-safety. The school places a high priority on keeping children safe when using ICT and organises events for children, parents and carers on safety and cyber-bullying.
- Many opportunities are created for pupils to apply and extend their ICT skills across the curriculum, though the lack of a good website or virtual learning environment (VLE) does not support this well. The school has recognised the weaknesses in its internet presence and was launching a

new website during the visit. ICT homework is set but is mostly optional and does not yet fully support the ICT curriculum.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is good.

- The management and leadership at both subject and whole-school level are good and have some outstanding features. Succession planning is excellent; the school has been able to maintain above average standards and good progress over a number of years despite considerable staff turnover. The monitoring of the work is regular, accurate and leads to effective development planning. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and based on a range of evidence, although the auditing of staff competence is based on skills only and lacks a focus on assessing their understanding. The outcomes from monitoring and evaluation drive the continuing professional development programme (CPD) for teachers and support staff. The school's commitment to CPD is impressive and is a key factor in maintaining good standards. Investments in ICT hardware and infrastructure have been progressive and good.
- Overall, management and leadership show good capacity to improve even further.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- focusing teaching more on the development of pupils' understanding rather than just their ICT skills
- implementing a VLE to further support pupils' achievements and bridge the home-school ICT work that pupils do
- developing the staff audit to assess their understanding of ICT.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**John Williams**  
**Additional Inspector**