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Dear Mrs Townsend

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 May 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 quality of assessment.

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 yourself, your ICT subject co-ordinator and your ICT tutor, observation of a Year 2 and a Year 5 lesson, discussions with Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and analysis of pupils' work.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Standards in ICT are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Achievement is good.

- Although the cohort of children into reception varies from year to year, they generally enter school with ICT skills and capabilities that are below expectations. They make good progress and by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage they confidently use a keyboard and mouse, radio controlled toys, a toy microwave oven and telephones. They use the mouse and keyboard to select programs on the class computers.

- Through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress due to good teaching and well planned activities. By Year 2 and Year 6 standards are above average.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from ICT to help them to progress as well as their peers. One lower attaining pupil spoke of how using ICT helped him to think more clearly, rather than worry about his handwriting, and so he was able to progress as well as others.
- The use of ICT makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and enjoyment. Pupils work well together and are happy to help their peers if they are in difficulty. Good examples were seen of Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils discussing their work with each other, and experimenting with programs, in order to develop their use and understanding of the program being used, or to overcome difficulties.
- By Year 6 pupils have a very good understanding of the need to be safe when accessing the internet. They have a very good understanding of the dangers of divulging personal details, of using social networking sites, and of responding to e-mails from unknown senders. They know that it is important to immediately tell a responsible adult at home or at school, if they are aware of inappropriate activities and sites.
- ICT is having a positive impact on raising standards in many subjects. Good examples were observed of the planned use of ICT to support English, mathematics, science, geography, history, art and Italian.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge, and confidence when using ICT to support teaching and learning, are good.
- The 'ICT tutor' gives good support for Year 5 and 6 pupils, which is resulting in standards that are above average.
- Teaching assistants support the subject well, or take half the class for a classroom task, whilst the class teacher takes the remainder to the suite. This allows pupils to each work at an individual computer at their own pace and ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the support and guidance they require.
- Lessons are well planned and well resourced. Lower attaining pupils are planned for well. However, planning does not always show how higher attaining pupils will be specifically supported and extended.
- Teachers confidently use interactive whiteboards (IWB) to support teaching. In a good Year 2 lesson the teacher used the IWB in the classroom to model how to access photographs of Lea and the Orkneys, and how to import them into a word processing program. Pupils were also encouraged to use the IWB to demonstrate their skills and understanding of the task, which they did with confidence and enjoyment. When the pupils transferred to the ICT suite, they quickly selected appropriate photographs to add to their written work on comparing their local environment with the Scottish island.

- There is no IWB or projector in the suite to support teaching and learning, especially for sharing pupils' work or for demonstrations within a lesson. You recognise that this is an area for development, as stated in your ICT development plan, and a projector has been ordered.
- Pupils are very motivated by the planned activities. As a result, behaviour in classroom lessons and in the suite is good.
- Teachers share the learning objectives of the lesson with the pupils but they are not always recapped at the end, so that pupils can self-assess how much they have learnt. In one lesson observed, the objectives were displayed but not in 'child friendly' language. This did not support the pupils' self assessment.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the ICT curriculum is good.

- The programme of study is taught and planned for well, through the use of a national scheme. A new scheme based on the local authority's 'An ICT Progression for Primary Schools' has recently been introduced and is strengthening the links between ICT and other subjects of the National Curriculum. However, this is not fully embedded.
- ICT is used well to enable pupils to develop their independent learning and creative thinking skills. During lessons pupils are encouraged to experiment or progress at their own pace. During a Year 5 lesson observed, pupils began by tentatively using 'autoshapes' to plan an aerial view of a playground. However, through experimentation and discussion with each other, they soon discovered that they could combine shapes to make representations of swings, benches and ducks on a pond.
- Resources for the subject are well organised and readily available for pupils to use. Good use is made of the suite. Although purpose built, it is not air-conditioned and can become uncomfortably warm. This is recognised in your development plan and you are presently comparing the suitability and cost of air-conditioning units, before purchasing.
- There is no club specifically for ICT. However, older pupils have access to the computer suite at lunch times to pursue ICT work, to support homework or to give the few who do not have access to computers at home, the opportunity to use a computer.
- Year 5 and 6 pupils are proud of the school newsletter, which they edit, publish and sell every half-term.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are good.

- The ICT co-ordinator provides good leadership of the subject. She has audited staff skills and provides appropriate training opportunities.
- You provide good support for the ICT co-ordinator, who has been encouraged to develop her role since coming to the school as a newly qualified teacher (NQT).

- The vision for ICT is understood by all staff and governors.
- The co-ordinator has formally monitored teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, but has not had the same opportunity to monitor and observe in the Foundation Stage. Feedback related to the strengths and areas for development is given to individual teachers. This gives good support for the development of ICT and is improving teachers' skills and knowledge.
- The policy of "best value" is adhered to well. New equipment is bought on the basis of value for money and the impact is reviewed in relation to pupils' learning.
- The ICT development plan shows responsibilities, time frames, costs and the success criteria. However, although implied, there is no overt mention of how this relates to raising achievement and standards.
- The policy for ICT is up-to-date and comprehensive. However, although it refers to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is no specific reference to pupils who are gifted and talented in ICT.
- Parents, pupils and staff are very well-informed about the safe use of ICT. A date has been planned for the local advisor for ICT to visit this term to talk to parents in more detail about internet and computer safety.
- Although staff have a good awareness of the appropriate use of new technologies when taken off the school premises and used at home, there is no written policy. During my visit you recognised that this was an omission and you immediately sought advice from the local authority, with the view to updating your policy.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is satisfactory.

- Regular assessments are made against coverage of the curriculum and the skills demonstrated by pupils, using "I can" statements.
- The co-ordinator, with guidance from the local authority, has introduced a new assessing pupil progress (APP) record sheet for ICT, which is providing a more rigorous assessment of pupils' achievement and standard.
- By Year 6, pupils have a sound understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. However, not all pupils are aware of what their next steps are.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- embedding the new assessment of pupils' progress record sheet to support tracking of pupils' achievement and to inform pupils of their next steps
- ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to self-assess their skills and/or knowledge of ICT at the end of a lesson or topic of work against the learning objectives and success criteria
- developing the policy for internet safety to included appropriate use by staff of laptops, memory sticks and school data when taken off site.

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

Anthony Green
Additional Inspector