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Mrs L Griffiths
Headteacher
Jesson's C of E (VA) Primary School
School Street
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Dear Mrs Griffiths

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: early learning

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and children during my visit on 23 November 2010 to evaluate the provision and outcomes for children in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

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 you, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, parent representatives; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including assessments of children's learning; and observation of sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The effectiveness of meeting the children's communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional learning and development needs is good.

Achievement

- Children achieve well over their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. From entry to Nursery, with extremely low levels of skill for their age, especially in speech and language development, children catch up well. Progress is particularly rapid for many in the Nursery in their personal, social and emotional development and in their speaking and listening skills. Reception year children chatter confidently, explain themselves clearly and are enthusiastic to initiate conversations

with adults and others. This lays a strong foundation for them making good progress in developing reading and writing skills.

- Standards rose markedly in 2010 to above the national average in all strands of language, communication and literacy, and in dispositions and attitudes and emotional development. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys or girls because staff take effective steps to develop all children's knowledge, skills and understanding through activities that catch their interest.
- Children enjoy the activities provided for them in the spacious indoors and outdoor environments. New children settle quickly into the routines and learn from others' good behaviour and positive attitudes. Children participate willingly in the carefully structured adult-led sessions and are able to concentrate for long periods of time on self-chosen activities. For example, a small group of children demonstrated determination and creativity in successfully making individual autumn collages. Children are provided with regular opportunities to take responsibility for their classroom, such as by tidying away as they sing along to the music.
- Not all children make the progress they could because in some of the adult-led sessions they do not have opportunities to make choices of their own to develop their practical skills and abilities. For example, children spent too long under the direction of the teacher when mixing colours rather than being given the chance to experiment for themselves.

Quality of provision

- The school has given considerable thought as to how to make best use of the extensive indoor and outdoor areas. To encourage children to develop skills covering all areas of learning, each indoor classroom has a specific focus for learning. Resources are available openly and labelled clearly which promote children's independence. Adults are deployed carefully to ensure that children make the best use of their time when working independently. However, leaders are aware that opportunities for mark-making and writing outdoors are less well developed.
- All staff skilfully engage children in activities that interest them. For example, following an autumn walk in the park, adults used questioning effectively to encourage children to feel and express empathy in a story-telling session. Throughout the setting vibrant displays are ongoing records of children's broad experiences and progress over the year.
- From regular observations and records of children's learning, staff know the children as individuals. They keep a close eye on those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. The school has developed strong links with other agencies to support their work in this area and to support families as well as individuals' special educational needs. Parents and carers say that they have confidence in the work of the school in meeting the learning needs of their children.

- Children make good progress in reading and writing in the Reception year partly because of good, structured teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) which follows national guidance. However, the school acknowledges there is scope to ensure children are given more opportunities to experiment with writing, especially outdoors.

Leadership and management

- Decisive and innovative leadership has resulted in significant changes in practice and a marked rise in outcomes for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Through creative team work, children's use of time has been organised carefully to create a better balance between teacher-led activities and child-initiated learning.
- Partnership work with parents and carers is a particular strength of the school. Through curriculum workshops and opportunities to work alongside children in school, parents and carers gain a good understanding of how children learn and how they can work with the school to support their children's learning at home.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader works closely with senior leaders to gain an accurate view of what has worked well and where action is needed to improve the quality of provision further. For example, through the school's performing arts status, children have good opportunities to develop their self-esteem by visiting other feeder nursery schools to perform as a choir.
- Adults work well together as a team. This has enabled leaders to develop and record the way children's progress is monitored. For example, by displaying the learning intentions of an activity nearby for adults to see and providing simple and effective ways for adults to record their observations of children's learning as it takes place.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- enhancing the outdoor provision so that it provides similarly good opportunities for children to practise writing to those available indoors
- creating more opportunities for children to make their own choices in developing their practical skills and abilities.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the Early Years Foundation Stage 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

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector