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Mrs J Thomas  
Headteacher  
Brougham Primary School  
Brougham Terrace  
Hartlepool  
TS24 8EY

Dear Mrs Thomas

### **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 29 September 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 deputy headteacher and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader; 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 developments needs is good.

### **Achievement**

- Children achieve well over their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage in language, communication 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 speaking, children catch up well. Progress is particularly rapid for many in the nursery in personal, social and emotional development and in their speaking and listening skills. From often only using one or two word utterances when they start in the nursery, Reception year children chatter confidently, explain themselves

clearly and initiate conversations with adults and others. This lays a strong foundation for progress in reading and writing.

- Standards rose markedly in 2008 and again in 2009 to above the national average in all strands of language, communication and literacy, and in dispositions and attitudes and emotional development. In 2010, however, inconsistencies in provision had a negative impact on children's learning and outcomes at the end of the Reception year were considerably lower. Although girls do better than boys, the gap has narrowed because staff take effective steps to develop the boys' knowledge, skills and understanding through activities that catch their interest.
- Children enjoy the wide range of interesting activities indoors and out. New children settle quickly into the routines and learn from others' extremely good behaviour and positive attitude. All participate willingly in adult-led sessions and often concentrate for long periods on self-chosen activities. Two Reception year girls spent considerable time in the role of teacher calling the register and then showing pictures in a book to an imaginary group while telling a story. Tidying up is slick; children accept responsibility for certain areas and sing along to the music as they put things where they belong.
- Not all children make the progress they could in some of the adult-led sessions because chances are missed to review children's understanding and to consolidate their knowledge. While children benefited from watching and listening to others re-tell a story, too many remained unsure of the key repetitive phrases to give a better re-telling next time.

### **Quality of provision**

- Staff have given considerable thought to how to make best use of the extensive indoor and outdoor areas. Resources are available openly and labelled clearly which promote children's independence as well as their speaking, reading and writing. For example, construction blocks placed next to small dinosaurs and other items ensured a group of boys working with an adult created their own dinosaur world. Similarly, many children visited a corner to draw, make marks and write their names on the large papers attached to the walls, floor and tables. Attractive displays are ongoing records of children's experiences and progress over the year.
- Staff observations and records of children's learning inform detailed planning. Staff know the children as individuals and keep a close eye on those with particular needs, including those who speak English as an additional language, and those whose language is slow to develop. They liaise with other agencies and make effective use of ideas and practices that have proved successful in fostering children's language. Staff are skilful in steering children's attention and engaging their interest.
- Children make marked 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, there is scope to tailor the provision even more closely to individual needs.

### **Leadership and management**

- Outstanding leadership in the last three years has resulted in significant changes in practice, a marked rise in outcomes and a higher profile for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the school as a whole. Partnership with parents and carers is good and developing; parents have taken to the idea of recording aspects of their children's 'magic moments' and also to the sessions to discuss their children's progress.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader, working with the knowledgeable support from you and your deputy, has an accurate view of what has worked well and where action is needed to improve the quality of provision further. Innovative and creative team work has proved valuable in developing ways to record the children's progress, such as the picture sheets with speech bubbles to capture children's comments related to themes.

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

- tailoring programmes, including story-telling and phonics, more closely to individual needs
- making full use of all key workers to provide even more small group sessions to allow children to participate fully in activities
- ironing out inconsistencies in adults' oral interactions with children.

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

**Sonja Øyen**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**