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Mr R Sullivan
Headteacher
Our Lady and St Philip Neri Roman
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Dear Mr Sullivan

Ofsted 2011–12 survey inspection programme: transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to primary schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visits on 10 October 2011 and 7 February 2012 to look at your work in transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1.

The visits 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: responses from parents in Year 1 to a questionnaire; interviews with Year 1 parents, careers and pupils; discussions with senior leaders and teachers in Reception and Year 1; scrutiny of relevant documents; observation of four lessons and the teaching of phonics.

Overall, the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 is satisfactory.

Key findings

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning from their good foundation in the Reception class as they move into Year 1. The school's records show that their progress accelerates again in Year 2 so that by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain at least the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A consistent approach to teaching phonics ensures that pupils build their early reading and writing skills systematically from Reception to Year 1.

- Well-planned arrangements for pupils to get to know their new teachers and become familiar with the routines of their classes begin before pupils leave the Reception Year, so pupils are happy, confident and settle quickly into Year 1.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the transition. They say that they, and their children, have been well supported so the change has been smooth and without interruption to learning. They feel that they have been kept well informed about the transition arrangements which have helped them to prepare their children too. Parents and carers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities feel that arrangements have been tailored to their child's emotional needs effectively.
- Through close liaison between staff, teaching in the first half of the autumn term in Year 1 is increasingly closely aligned with the approaches adopted in the Early Years Foundation Stage which contributes to a smooth transition. Pupils work well together and independently because routines in Reception are continued in Year 1.
- There is a gradual change to more formal, discrete subject teaching in the second half of the autumn as the school assesses that pupils are ready which contributes to their satisfactory progress in Year 1. However, the pace of learning in Year 1 lessons observed varied. When the pace of learning was less brisk, tasks and timely adult interventions did not consistently challenge all pupils to accelerate their progress.
- Assessments are carried out regularly and monitoring information is analysed systematically to identify the progress that individuals and groups of pupils are making. However, the different assessments used provide inconsistent information with the result that school is not able to rigorously evaluate the rate of progress that pupils are making from the end of Reception through Year 1.
- A specific transition policy makes the aims and expectations of a smooth transition for pupils explicit. An action plan to develop this further identifies next steps but lacks quantifiable goals and success measures to evaluate the impact of actions on the outcomes for pupils.
- There has been significant staff change recently. A Year 1 teacher and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage have left so temporary arrangements are in place to fulfil these roles. Suitable links are being established with other local outstanding practitioners to maintain the momentum of changes that have already been made to transition.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of the action plan for transition by including quantifiable goals and measures of success so that the impact of actions on the pupils' progress and provision is clear

- ensuring that pupils in Year 1 are consistently challenged to accelerate their progress in lessons by:
 - consistently matching challenging work to the different abilities of pupils
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants intervene and engage with pupils who are participating less effectively, including during whole-class activity
- reviewing how the knowledge and skills that pupils have when they start Year 1 are assessed and monitored, so that the evaluation of their progress is consistent and accurate.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop transition at your school.

As 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

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector