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Mr R Coleman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Coleman

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 4 October 2011 and 9 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: observations of two lessons each in the Year 1 class and in the mixed Year 1/2 class; short visits to the two Reception classes; interviews with staff, governors, Year 1 pupils and parents and carers; and an analysis of pupils' work and relevant documents.

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

Key findings

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 achieve well. They make good progress in Reception, and by the time they are ready to move to Year 1, most have attained standards that are broadly as expected. This good progress is well maintained in Year 1 with pupils on target to meet national averages by the end of Year 2. Small proportions of the more able pupils are on target to exceed national averages.

- Attainment on entry to Reception varies considerably from year to year. This is because some cohorts have a significant proportion of learners for whom English is an additional language or a higher proportion that start school shortly after reaching the age of four. A significant minority of children start school with personal, social and emotional skills and communication and language development that are below the expectations for their age.
- Last year, summer-born boys made good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although their attainment was still below the expected level on entry into Year 1. As a result of additional support to develop their social and emotional development and their communication and literacy skills, their progress has accelerated during the time they have been in Year 1. Some individuals have made outstanding progress.
- Children are taught well in Reception and this quality is maintained in Year 1. A number of outstanding features were observed in lessons and in the pupils' books. These features included the high level of teacher expectations, the rapid pace of learning and the keen pupil engagement in activities.
- Classroom environments are vibrant learning areas with an outdoor area used well to support practical activities. Resources, such as the interactive whiteboard, enhance lessons by reinforcing learning through visual prompts. Teaching assistants are used well to support learning and provide individual guidance where necessary.
- Pupils' books indicate high-quality marking in literacy. Achievement is clearly recognised alongside an indication of what the next step in pupils' learning should be. These steps are closely linked with individual targets for improvement and are clearly understood by the pupils. However, as the school recognises, the marking of mathematics work is less consistent and is a focus for whole-school development.
- Children in Reception are involved in suggesting and planning topics to learn and this approach to pupils' involvement is maintained well in Year 1. Pupils' contribution to planning ensures that the curriculum is meaningful and relevant. Teachers provide extremely stimulating activities for them to explore, thus ensuring that they experience memorable high-quality experiences.
- The positive attitudes of the children in Reception to their teachers, to each other and to their learning activities are well maintained as they move into Year 1. Their good, and often outstanding, behaviour contributes to high levels of engagement in lessons. Pupils in Year 1 feel safe in school and know what constitutes unsafe actions.
- School leaders and managers demonstrate a very good understanding of the significant role played by the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 teachers in building the strong foundations for future learning. They ensure that their work is never marginalised, thus enabling them to provide a high-quality environment.

- The recent introduction of a whole-school approach to monitoring pupils highlights the good achievement made from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1. Pupils' progress is clearly evident and enables robust and challenging targets to be set and reviewed regularly.
- Rigorous assessments are used to inform the ongoing progress of pupils. However, the timings of initial assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not provide an accurate picture of attainment on entry given that they are undertaken six weeks into the first term.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing induction systems into the Early Years Foundation Stage so that assessments reflect a more accurate picture of attainment on entry into school
- ensuring that the marking of pupils' mathematics work in Year 1 helps them to recognise what they can do well and guides them towards the next steps in their learning.

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

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector