

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs J Skinner
Headteacher
Shakespeare Infant School
Shakespeare Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 4FZ

Dear Mrs Skinner

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 the 28 September 2011 and 20 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, carers and pupils; discussions with senior leaders and teachers in Reception and Year 1; scrutiny of relevant documents; observation of six part-lessons in Year 1 and a learning walk which included all three classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Key findings

- Children make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the vast majority exceed age-related expectations by the end of Reception. This enables pupils to begin Year 1 with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need in order to become successful and achieve well with their more formal education. This is especially the case with their reading, writing, mathematics, and personal and social

development. Although assessment and tracking are generally rigorous in the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff do not always assess children's ability in terms of age-related expectations. This is particularly the case for children who begin school with lower-than-expected levels of communication, language and literacy.

- By the end of Year 2, pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. They attain standards that are consistently and significantly above national averages. Furthermore, a higher proportion than that in most schools attain the higher Level 3 in all three subjects.
- The systematic teaching of letters and the sounds they represent has made a significant contribution to accelerating pupils' learning of reading and writing.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Year 1 has improved since the autumn term and is now more consistently good. This is because teachers have increased their expectations of what pupils can achieve. The learning support team make a strong contribution to providing valuable, well-targeted support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- A personalised approach to learning reflects the school's commitment to do whatever it takes to ensure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good or better progress. The regular and rigorous assessment of pupils' progress enables teachers and key leaders and managers to identify those pupils potentially at risk of underachieving. Provision is subsequently adjusted to meet the needs of individuals. For example, one pupil at risk of underachieving received tailored teaching which incorporated additional use of role play to support the pupil's self-confidence and speaking skills. The pupil also received well-structured additional support with reading and writing. As a result, the pupil has made accelerated progress in less than a year and is now operating within age-related expectations, including in writing.
- The curriculum promotes active, creative and purposeful learning. Programmes of work are broad and balanced and fit together coherently and in a way that promotes a good progression of learning and skills.
- Senior leaders have recently produced a transition policy and improvement plan. These are aimed at further improving the school's work on transition between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1. The policy has yet to become embedded within the school's practice. The improvement plan is appropriately focused on securing more effective transition arrangements. However, it does not include enough quantifiable success criteria.
- Parents and carers express a high level of satisfaction with the transition process. They would nonetheless welcome an additional meeting at the end of the summer term prior to their child entering Year 1.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the way the school assesses children when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that those children, in particular, considered to be at lower-than-expected levels in their communication, language and literacy skills are clearly assessed against age-related expectations
- ensuring good levels of challenge in the activities set from the beginning of Year 1, especially for those pupils who are more able
- embedding and then formally monitoring the impact of the new transition policy as well as refining the improvement plan so that progress in improving the transition process can be measured.

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

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector