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Mrs W Parkins  
Headteacher  
Ellenbrook Community Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Parkins

**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 13 September 2011 and on 29 February and 1 March 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 and carers 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; and observation of four lessons, with shorter visits to other lessons and learning activities.

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

**Key findings**

- Children start school with levels of attainment, on average, that are a little above age-related expectations, especially in personal and social development. Staff assess this very accurately and systematically and it leads to high expectations of the pupils. These expectations are very well met as children move through the very well organised Nursery and Reception classes. They move into Year 1 with consistently high attainment. They are confident, exceptionally independent, keen to pursue questions and find out for themselves and have a real love for learning.

- The children's high attainment, as they move into Year 1, provides a management challenge and opportunity; namely how to ensure that pupils continue to make excellent progress, while sustaining their levels of independence and motivation. Your solution is to trial a system in which the style of Early Years Foundation Stage practice and organisation the school has developed so well is married with the additional, increasingly demanding, subject requirements in Key Stage 1.
- This is proving a great success. The teacher moved up with the class from Reception into Year 1, which made aspects of the transition smooth. However, more important was your realisation that, for the system to be rigorous, Year 1 staff need to have a close understanding of both Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 assessments and curriculum.
- Accordingly, the teacher has developed her subject expertise and expectations for Key Stage 1 quickly. Working closely with you and other very knowledgeable staff, and through her own academic study, she has developed an exceptionally effective system in which all pupils receive very challenging group and class teaching customised precisely to meet their carefully assessed academic and social needs. It is given by both the teacher and very skilled higher level teaching assistant. Pupils really enjoy all their lessons and contribute to them, and each other's learning, with self-assurance.
- In one lesson, for example, a high attaining group led by the higher level teaching assistant wrote interesting, well-structured accounts of a recent school visit using time vocabulary, such as 'next' and 'later'. A lower attaining group worked well on a demanding task with the teacher about sentence construction, also using time vocabulary. Both groups worked hard and learnt much. This contributes to their rapid progress over time towards demanding targets, which build strongly on their high prior attainment.
- When pupils are not working in such teaching groups with an adult, they use their excellent skills to work on very well structured and challenging independent tasks. The curriculum in Year 1 is well constructed and motivating. It includes well targeted phonics teaching, which is consistent with that in other year groups. All subjects are covered appropriately but you recognise that, for them to be as successful as the best, increased rigour and evidence of pupils' learning is needed in some foundation subjects, including music.
- Parents and carers are understandably very pleased with the transition into Year 1 and with the progress their children make. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff have improved further the way in which parents and carers can contribute to assessments of their children.
- The positive change achieved in Year 1 is part of successful work across the whole school to make the learning always exciting and challenging. Under your strong leadership, staff, in all roles and year groups, discuss their work and the needs of pupils at a high, knowledgeable level. This leads to improved provision in many areas. Core subject leaders show

much expertise. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage are sustaining and expertly building on the previous successes. The school environment, indoors and outdoors, is highly stimulating and very conducive to high-quality learning. The school is well placed to continue its improvement from an already strong position.

**An area for improvement, which we discussed, is:**

- ensuring that learning in all foundation subjects is purposeful, rigorous and coherent, starting from the point of transition, and that the school has good evidence of pupils' learning and attainment in all subjects.

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

**Robin Hammerton**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**