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Mrs B Burke  
Headteacher  
Rattlesden Church of England  
Voluntary Controlled School,  
Rattlesden  
Bury St Edmunds  
IP30 0SE

Dear Mrs Burke

### **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 14 September 2011 and on 23 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 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.

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

### **Key findings**

- After a good start in Reception, pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning in Year 1. Data show that progress picks up again in Year 2 so that standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are consistently above those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The impact of the national change to allow all pupils to join the Reception class in September, coupled with the loss of the Nursery class this year, has had a marked impact on the organisation of classes in this small

school. Year 1 pupils are now placed in either the Reception/Year 1 class or the Year 1/2 class for the whole year, rather than a group of pupils moving from one class to the other each term.

- The decision about which pupils were placed in each class was made using a combination of their age, ability and maturity. The school considered that children placed in the Reception/Year 1 class might be perceived to be 'staying down' so staff offered their parents the opportunity to have a discussion about the reasons and how they felt that the approach to learning would better meet their needs. As a result, most parents are positive about transition.
- The small size of the school and day-to-day organisation mean that those pupils who move to the Year 1/2 class know, and are known by, their new teacher. This helps the vast majority to settle quickly and happily at school. The school appreciates that where children are changing class, parents and carers would also like the opportunity to meet the new teacher before the move and have planned for this to happen in the future.
- As parents, carers and pupils recognise, there are key differences between the two classes. Year 1 pupils in the Reception/Year 1 class continue to experience a play-based approach to learning, while, for those in Year 1/2, teaching is more formal from the start. At this point in the year, the school's data indicate that pupils in the middle of the ability range are making a similar rate of progress in both classes. However, this new way of working is still at an early stage and the school recognises that it needs to keep it under review to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and consider the point at which pupils in the Reception/Year 1 class may move to a more formal approach to learning.
- Systems have been introduced over the last year to review pupils' achievement regularly. Expectations of the level they will reach by the end of Year 2 are based on their attainment at the end of the Reception year. This in turn indicates how well they should be doing by the end of Year 1 and hence the progress they should make each year. However, the two classes move from Early Years Foundation Stage assessments to National Curriculum assessments at different points, and indeed at different times for different pupils; and review meetings between you and each class teacher are not yet fully established. The result is that the school is not yet able to keep a close enough check on the progress pupils are making during the course of Year 1.
- Where pupils stay in the Reception/Year 1 class the teacher is familiar with both the Early Years Foundation Stage assessments and what pupils know, understand and can do. Where pupils move class earlier than they have previously, their assessments are more likely to be against Early Years Foundation Stage criteria. As yet these data are not analysed in enough detail to ensure that the teacher has a really clear picture of each pupil's learning.

- The curriculum in the Reception/Year 1 class is based on the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, while in the Year 1/2 class it is based on the National Curriculum, with a focus on Year 2. Both classes adapt the curriculum for Year 1 pupils, taking account of the learning they should be experiencing, but there is no overall plan setting out exactly what should be covered. In part, this is because the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are still being established. Reductions in staffing levels, coupled with the new class organisation have also led to teachers changing the way they teach phonics (the linking of letters and the sounds they make), so that there are inconsistencies between the two classes.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- accelerating progress in Year 1 by:
  - ensuring that all staff fully understand what the assessments at the end of the Reception year mean that pupils know, understand and can do so that they plan work closely matched to their needs right from the start in Year 1
  - agreeing at what point pupils will be moved from Early Years Foundation Stage assessments to National Curriculum levels, and implement plans to hold regular progress meetings with staff
- ensuring that Year 1 pupils are getting their curriculum entitlement by:
  - mapping a specific Year 1 curriculum
  - reviewing the teaching of phonics to make sure that all stages are covered, and that there is appropriate progression over time
  - developing the role of middle leaders to take responsibility for ensuring continuity and progression in learning across the key stages
- monitoring the impact of the different approaches to teaching and learning on pupils' achievement.

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

**Alison Storey**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**