

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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Mr A Gallagher
Headteacher
Burghfield St Mary's C.E. Primary
School,
Theale Road
Burghfield Village
Reading
RG30 3TX

Dear Mr Gallagher

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 18 October 2011 and 21 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 in the Year 1 class and a short visit to the Reception class. Interviews were held with staff, pupils, parents and carers. Pupils' work was analysed and relevant documents were scrutinised.

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

Key findings

- Children start school with skills that are as expected for their age. They achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and start Year 1 with standards that are above those expected for their age. This good achievement is maintained well in Year 1. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported well in class and their progress is carefully monitored.
- The school carefully considers the assessments it receives from the pre-school settings. Detailed observations of the children are made during the

first few weeks in Reception, the findings of which are used well to plan activities which meet individual needs and develop specific skills. They are also used to set future targets for achievement as the children move through the school.

- The progress of children who are summer born or whose parents work for the Armed Forces are very carefully monitored and their progress evaluated regularly. Teaching assistants are used well to support those groups of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. For example, some boys whose parents are in the Armed Forces are given additional help to develop their social and emotional skills. However, leaders and managers recognise the need to introduce more detailed systems to monitor and evaluate the progress pupils make in their personal, social, and emotional development as they move through the school.
- Children are taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is maintained well in Year 1 through a team-teaching approach deployed across the two age groups. Teaching assistants are used extremely well to support groups of pupils and individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Classrooms are stimulating learning areas where staff interact very well with the children. Lessons are lively and most move along at a good pace. Visual prompts are used well to reinforce key skills. Good use is made of the outdoor area as an integral part of the learning environment.
- The use of target cards to promote progress in reading, writing and mathematics is an outstanding feature of Year 1 provision. Pupils use their target cards on a daily basis and have a very good understanding of what they have achieved so far and what they need to do next in their learning. Nevertheless, while there are some examples of good quality marking in the pupils' workbooks, there are inconsistencies in approach.
- The school uses detailed systems to monitor pupils' achievement. The value added to pupils' progress is clearly evident and is particularly good in reading and writing.
- Reception children contribute well to their learning by suggesting themes to explore such as winter and the Chinese New Year. Year 1 pupils follow the same topic plan as Year 2. Interesting and exciting experiences are planned for them. For example, a topic on 'Ocean World' has included the study of islands, creative work on pirates and learning about aspects of history related to the sea, such as The Titanic. Specialist teaching for modern foreign languages and music provides consistency.
- The positive attitudes of the children in Reception to staff and to each other, and the eagerness in which they learn are maintained well as they move into Year 1. Their good behaviour results in high levels of engagement in lessons.
- School leaders and managers have a very secure understanding of the significant role that the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 play in

the development of children's skills. They are uncompromising in ensuring that children receive the best possible start to their education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- introducing a system to monitor pupils' personal, social and emotional development as they move through the school
- ensuring that the marking of pupils' work in Year 1 is consistent and helps them to recognise what they can do well and guides them towards the next step in their learning
- considering extending the use of the team-teaching approach by ability grouping across the two year groups.

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