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Mrs J Shipton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Shipton

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 3 October 2011 and 2 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: 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 three lessons and talking to a group of pupils about their experiences in school.

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

Key findings

Children enter the Nursery class in the Early Years Foundation Stage with a wide range of skills that are, overall, in line with those expected for their age. However, nearly half of the children speak a language as their first language other than English and have low attainment in early literacy. The Nursery class is situated next to the Reception class and there is a shared outdoor learning space between the two classes. Consequently, children freely play in the shared area and mix well. The staff know the children and their families very well. This creates a high level of trust from parents and carers and leads to a smooth transition from the Nursery to the Reception class.

- By the time children reach the end of the Reception year they grow in confidence and achieve very well. Pupils continue to make outstanding progress in Year 1 and by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1 standards are high, with approximately half of all pupils attaining higher levels in reading and mathematics and one third of pupils attaining higher levels in writing. From pupils' starting points this represents outstanding progress.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about the transition arrangements from the Reception class to Year 1. They comment that the school 'goes the extra mile' to ensure that every pupil is helped to succeed through the excellent transition arrangements from one key stage to another. This is particularly significant as the Early Years Foundation Stage is situated a short walk away from the Key Stage 1 school site. For example, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with individualised holiday tasks during the summer to familiarise themselves with the location of Key Stage 1 and the expectations in Year 1.
- A key strength in the school's very effective transition is the quality of the communication between staff and the way assessment data are used to provide each pupil with an individual transition plan which focuses well on academic and social outcomes. A transition staff training day, approximately three weeks before the end of the summer term, focuses exclusively on monitoring pupils' progress and setting demanding targets for transition. As a result, the needs of all pupils, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are carefully scrutinised. Consequently, when pupils enter Year 1 no time is lost in continuing learning, including where necessary for some pupils, putting interventions in place.
- The good teaching and very effective curriculum focuses on pupils contributing to their learning. Pupils are encouraged to decide on what they would like to find out about through topic work. This approach builds very effectively on the investigative approach to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, pupils present themselves very confidently and talk about their progress well. As in the Reception Year, parents and carers of the Year 1 children are keen to support their children at home, as well as a number contributing their skills in school. In this way, parents and carers understand the changing expectations for Key Stage 1.
- An innovative feature of transition through to Key Stage 1 is the wide range of well thought-out play activities, including opportunities for literacy and numeracy, at lunchtimes. Providing familiar play-based activities from the Early Years Foundation Stage such as dressing-up, a story tent, early science investigations and physical activities, supports pupils' transition very well, especially in the early stages of Year 1. Consequently, pupils look forward to lunchtime and can exercise choice, as well as the school maximising on learning opportunities outside formal lessons.

- You approach transition in a very purposeful and focused manner. As a result, the individual needs of young children are very well met, which is demonstrated by the pupils' outstanding achievement, enjoyment in school and parents' and carers' high levels of support for the school's work. You are confident that new arrangements from September 2012 when all children will spend a full year in the Reception class will have a further positive impact on pupils' levels of achievement when they transfer to Year 1.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the existing very effective routines and structures which lead to the high-quality care in the transfer from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1 continues from September 2012, when the school has one intake in the Reception Year at the beginning of the autumn term.

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

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector