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Mr N Tait
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tait

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 19 October 2011 and 6 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 and middle leaders and teachers in Reception and Year 1; scrutiny of relevant documents including assessments of pupils and school strategic plans; observation of four lessons and short visits to other lessons and school activities.

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

Key findings

- The current Year 1 pupils made good progress when they were in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They developed good skills in working together and independently: perseverance, concentration and problem-solving. Their attitudes to learning are good. Since being in Year 1, however, their progress is satisfactory. It has become quicker after a slow start in the early part of the year.
- There have been some improvements during the year. For example, in the first Ofsted visit, some aimless activities for groups of children were

observed; such activities have been removed. The school has improved its assessment practice in Year 1 and established suitably demanding targets for pupils for the year, based appropriately on assessments from the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. Staff from the Early Years Foundation Stage share and discuss their accurate and well-organised assessments made of pupils with staff working in Year 1. Year 1 pupils know their individual learning targets.

- Teachers in Year 1 enthuse and engage pupils. However, they dominate some lessons so that pupils' independent skills are underused. Pupils work hard nevertheless. In one literacy lesson observed, they wrote at length about a story they knew. However, the tasks set for different groups of pupils were not challenging enough to enable them to make good progress. Scrutiny of work over time shows that pupils' progress in writing is satisfactory. The school, however, considered that pupils' progress was good, or better than that expected. In large part, this error occurred because some assessments made by staff are too generous. Pupils' work and assessments are moderated and checked within the school but are not compared to those of pupils from other schools.
- You and your senior team have a clear vision for the school and a strong determination to raise standards. However, due in part to staff absence, subject leadership for literacy and numeracy is not strong enough to promote higher expectations of pupils in Year 1. Senior leaders have put in place well-organised assessment systems and several worthwhile actions to improve provision in Year 1. However, the impact of these actions on outcomes for pupils is not always monitored and evaluated robustly. The improvement plan lacks clear success criteria. Thus not all of the improvement work has been fully effective.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the transition; they note that their children are happy and confident in school. They feel that the school shares useful information with them and are reassured by the school's friendly, welcoming style. Parents and carers who do not speak English as their first language are impressed with their children's improving vocabulary and their accurate pronunciation of English words.
- The dedicated phonics teaching lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils as they progress from Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1. The curriculum as a whole in Year 1 does not offer enough opportunities for active and deep learning across all subjects or reasons to write and use numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising further pupils' progress in Year 1 by
 - ensuring that staff are fully aware of what should be expected of pupils at each National Curriculum level and sub level and, in doing so, raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve

- setting work and activities in English and mathematics lessons which precisely meet the needs of each pupil and enable them to reach the next level, sub-level, or target more quickly
 - improving the accuracy of teachers’ assessments of pupils, including through moderation of the assessments with teachers from another school or schools
 - building on and using better the good independent learning skills and motivation which pupils bring with them from Reception
 - improving the organisation, challenge and content of phonics lessons
- improving the curriculum in Year 1, as a part of a coherent whole-school curriculum, so that it incorporates a wider range of challenging, motivating and exciting activities across 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