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Mrs P Harbot
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harbot

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 11 October 2011 and 5 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 of Year 1 pupils to a questionnaire and discussions with some parents and carers; discussions with pupils in Year 1 and with their teachers; meetings with senior leaders and teachers in Reception; scrutiny of documents; observation of four lessons in Year 1.

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

Key findings

- A significant proportion of pupils in Year 1 are not on track to reach the levels expected of them for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well below the national average. The school's data, observations of lessons and pupils' work indicate that a majority of pupils make expected progress in Year 1. However, low-attaining pupils and those identified as having special educational needs make slow progress. In contrast, a few pupils, mainly the more able, make better progress. Pupils' attainment is higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. However, because overall

standards are low and pupils only make satisfactory progress, their achievement is inadequate.

- Until 2011, the assessment of pupils' attainment on entry and throughout the Nursery and Reception was not as accurate as it should be. The school has taken recent steps to improve the accuracy of assessments and to get a clearer picture of the progress pupils make between Reception and Year 2. Staff have moderated pupils' work and used examples to ensure that all staff know what is expected at each pre-National Curriculum level. However, the school's expectations of pupils' progress are too low.
- Teaching is satisfactory in Year 1. Teachers use questions well to make pupils think, apply their knowledge, make deductions and make gains in vocabulary, language and in their understanding. This approach particularly helps more able pupils to make good progress. In some lessons opportunities are missed for all pupils to answer the questions, because too much time is wasted sitting listening inactively to others and to the teacher, and because time is wasted waiting for equipment or listening to teaching assistants explaining the task.
- This year, a teacher and a teaching assistant moved from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1, and a Year 1 teacher moved into Reception. This strategy has raised teachers' expectations of pupils because teachers in Reception and Nursery have a better knowledge of the work and the standards that the children need to reach by the end of Year 1. The strategy has also begun to help pupils settle quicker and gain in confidence. Pupils' social and emotional skills develop well in Year 1. This, in part, is helped by the effective nurture sessions. In lessons they behave well, cooperate with others and respond well to their learning.
- Pupils entering Year 1 have been unready for the National Curriculum work, as it is taught by the school, because they have been unused to working in groups or at tables. Staff have taken effective action to redress this which is seeing some benefits. Initiatives such as daily focused reading, writing and "snappy maths" sessions in Reception, ensure that all children are becoming ready for work in Year 1. The school has a good quality strategic plan to improve teaching and the curriculum on either side of transition. Although it is too early for the plan to have had a marked impact, there are signs of improvement.
- The majority of parents and carers were positive about the arrangements for transition between Reception and Year 1. In particular they liked the fact that a teacher and a teaching assistant moved into Year 1 with the children because they felt this had a positive impact on their children's confidence, speed of settling and on their progress. A minority of parents and carers said they would like more frequent and practical information about the Year 1 teachers, classrooms, teaching and the curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more frequent and useful information to parents and carers, before transition, about how well their children are progressing and about the curriculum and teaching in Year 1
- ensuring that all Year 1 pupils learn actively throughout each lesson and the time they spend sitting listening to others is minimised
- harmonising the teaching and curriculum, particularly in Reception in the term before the transition, so that the children are better prepared for school and make good progress across the transition.

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

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector