

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



22 March 2012

Mrs J Shaw  
Headteacher  
Catchgate Primary School  
Blackett Street  
Annfield Plain  
Stanley  
DH9 8LX

Dear Mrs Shaw

**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 20 September 2011 and 9 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; two 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 five lessons.

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

**Key findings**

- Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge which are well below those expected for their age. There are a higher proportion of pupils who have special educational needs; are known to be eligible for a free school meal or whose circumstances make them vulnerable and these pupils also make good progress because they are identified early and provision is closely aligned to their needs.
- They make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage where attainment is improving year-on-year. Pupils enter Year 1 still below national expectations but make rapid progress across Years 1 and 2 to

leave with attainment nearer to national expectations. This represents good achievement.

- The school has improved transition arrangements substantially across the year. There has been a seamless move from Reception to Year 1 despite necessary changes to Year 1 staffing. A small group of pupils who have special educational needs or who have underdeveloped social and emotional skills are taught in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. This fosters opportunities to experience more play-based learning and smaller group work which is accelerating their progress in these areas.
- The school has a clear transition policy. This provides a three-day induction at the end of the summer term where pupils meet their teacher and learn in their new classes. This is to be further extended to a week. Pupils feel safe and secure in their new classes and know their new teachers and surroundings well.
- Reception and Year 1 teachers plan the first few weeks of learning for Year 1 pupils together. They also pass on children's work and favourite teacher resources to make the transition easier. Parents and carers say that their children feel well prepared for the move and that they are kept well informed by the school about which classes their child will be moving to.
- Teaching is good and in the first term it mirrors Reception organisation and planning. Throughout the year, pupils move seamlessly to more formal teaching and whole-class sessions but with a good range of group work and independent learning. Evidence from assessments from Reception is well used to plan topics which fill gaps in pupils learning. For example, this year there were more role-play opportunities to develop boys' speaking and listening and social skills as well as activities which appealed to many girls in improving their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Support staff are knowledgeable and are well deployed to work with groups and individuals in lessons. However, during whole-class sessions where pupils learn 'the sounds that letters make' their expertise could be better used to ensure that the learning is a closer match to all pupils' needs.
- Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is monitored well through the Reception Year and into Year 1, but after a period the monitoring of their progress and development in this area is not continued. Pupils behave well. They are engaged in their learning and respond well to teachers' questioning. Pupils enjoy their learning and say that they feel safe in school. In the lessons observed, pupils' attitudes to learning were developing well. They have formed good relationships with adults and each other, despite some having changed class halfway through the year.
- The transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1 is high profile within the school. Senior leaders recognise the importance of building on the improvements in Reception attainment and ensuring that

good progress is maintained. Their work in this area has resulted in whole-school improvements to the way in which pupils' progress is assessed and monitored across the school. The schools' own data show that this is already having an impact on the progress of different groups across the school and is narrowing the gaps between the attainment of different groups of pupils such as those known to be eligible for a free school meal, those with a special educational need and/or disability and summer born boys.

- Subject leaders are fully involved in monitoring the pupils' progress during transition. The literacy and numeracy subject leader is an experienced early years practitioner and has a very good understanding of the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1. Other senior leaders who teach in Key Stage 2 are also involved in transition arrangements and often teach the younger pupils during active learning weeks.
- Parents and carers who expressed some concerns at the first inspection visit about arrangements for meeting new teachers before their child moved classes have been heard. Parents and carers spoken to on the second visit say that communication has improved substantially, especially in relation to how they can help their child at home and information they receive about their child's progress. A newly introduced mid-year report tells parents and carers exactly where their child is in relation to their previous attainment, national expectations and what the next steps are. This has been very well received along with extended opportunities to discuss this report in detail with teachers.
- The school is very aware that a large proportion of parents and carers are reluctant to engage with the school. Nevertheless, they make every effort to encourage parents and carers to come into school. The school provides a raft of appropriate courses and detailed information through: learning journals; opportunities to come into school weekly to change reading books and talk to staff; newsletters; and the internet café initiative to engage as many parents and carers as they can.

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

- revising the way phonics is taught in Year 1, by:
  - using support staff more effectively to work with groups of pupils
  - teaching a discrete phonics lesson which is a better match to pupils' phase of learning
  - giving parents and carers more information about how to correctly pronounce individual sounds
- improving the assessment of pupils' personal, social and emotional development throughout Year 1 and beyond

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

**Joy Frost**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**