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Ms C Bergel
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bergel

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 5 October 2011 and 20 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 leaders and teachers in Reception and Year 1; scrutiny of relevant documents; observation of four lessons in Year 1 and brief visits to the Reception and Nursery classes.

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

Key findings

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1. The school's records show that this satisfactory progress is maintained in Year 2 so that by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In response to a significant dip in the standards attained in writing at the end of Key Stage 1, the school has introduced a commercial scheme into the Reception class. This is successfully targeting the development of reading and writing skills through a focused approach on letter sounds

(phonics). Notable improvements were seen in the Reception class during the second visit.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is an appropriate emphasis on child-initiated learning both inside and out of the classroom. This is suitably maintained into Year 1 through a range of activities available for the pupils to independently engage with. During the autumn term, there is a gradual increase in the number of whole-class teaching sessions. Teachers' exposition is generally clear and pupils are given appropriate opportunities to reflect on and self-assess their learning with their peers. However, there are inconsistencies in planning and the systems used for rewards and sanctions between the two parallel classes.
- Assessments of pupils are carried out regularly with data analysed systematically to check the progress that pupils make. However, the school is aware that the timing of these assessments does not always provide the most useful information from which to plan. Scrutiny of workbooks indicates that pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve their very best. Teachers provide insufficient feedback on the progress they have made on a day-to-day basis and do not inform parents and carers if their children are meeting age-related expectations. There are few consistent references to the next learning steps that pupils can take in their learning and pupils do not have targets to work towards. These problems have not been identified by subject leaders.
- Most pupils start Year 1 with levels of personal, social and emotional development that are commensurate with their age. They are happy, confident and settled. By following a nationally recognised scheme and assessment system for personal, social and emotional development, any pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are quickly identified and they are given additional support and guidance with these skills.
- The need to respond to local needs by providing, at late notice, a second Year 1 class in a one form entry primary school, has caused a number of organisational issues which the leadership team could not have foreseen.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests with topics planned that engage them in their learning. For example, as part of their topic based on 'toys' the pupils have designed and made their own puppets and written character reports about them. Nevertheless, subject leaders do not always express clarity about the core purposes of Year 1 and have not ensured that there is consistency in practice across classes.
- As a consequence of the reorganisation of Year 1 into two classes, parents and carers have expressed a mixed response to transition arrangements. Although most agreed that their children are happy at school, a significant minority of parents and carers have explained that the transition into Year 1 has not been a smooth one. They initially felt uncertainty over the organisation and staffing of the two classes and have accurately identified inconsistencies in the provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that class organisation, including lesson planning, rewards and behaviour sanctions, is planned consistently across the two Year 1 classes
- developing systems to mark and assess pupils' work in Year 1 which help them recognise what they can do well, guide them towards the next step or target in their learning, and help to inform parents and carers of their children's abilities in relation to age-related expectations
- involving subject leaders in the consistent planning and delivery of the transition process to ensure that they identify the core purpose of Year 1 as a year group in its own right.

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