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Mrs J Christie
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Christie

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, parents and carers and pupils, during visits on 6 October 2011 and 21 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: observation of eight lessons; scrutiny of relevant documents; interviews with Year 1 pupils, conversations with parents and carers, and discussions with senior and middle leaders and teachers in Reception and Year 1.

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 from low starting points when they were in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They did particularly well in developing their numeracy skills. School data and observations of learning show they are making expected progress in Year 1, with more pupils working at National Curriculum levels than in previous years.
- The school has appropriate transition arrangements. The close links between all staff ensure that when pupils enter Year 1, their individual Early Years Foundation Stage assessments are accepted as accurate and no time is wasted reassessing the pupils. Particularly in the autumn term,

the structure of the Year 1 curriculum includes aspects of practice that are successful in the Reception classes. For example, the Year 1 pupils enjoy outdoor learning in a dedicated area that allows for activities chosen by pupils as well as adult-led activities.

- Strengths observed in teaching and in pupils' recorded work included; the range of opportunities pupils have for independent writing; the readiness of teachers to adapt weekly planning to take into account the daily assessments of pupils' understanding; the careful deployment of teaching assistants across all ability groups and the emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills. Where progress in lessons was satisfactory, there were a number of factors acting as barriers to good progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson a group of higher attaining pupils made errors because they were unclear about how to tackle the task they had been set. In other lessons, adults occasionally struggled to gain the full attention of lower attaining boys and tended to target questions only at pupils volunteering answers. Finally, in a session on the sounds letters make (phonics), a mismatch between the learning objective and the range of activities undertaken by pupils meant that only limited progress was made learning about words with the 'ar' sound.
- The school collects a range of assessment data about pupils' progress. This helps teachers to know how well individual pupils are performing. However, attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is not analysed to ensure that the school leaders and Year 1 teachers are clear about how groups of pupils compare with similar pupils nationally. For example, on entry to Year 1, boys attain well below girls in reading and writing. However, because the school focuses on individuals, it has not diagnosed the precise factors leading to this low attainment or set targets for this group that are monitored throughout the year to ensure that the gender gaps in these areas are narrowing.
- You and your senior team have a clear vision for the school and a strong determination to raise attainment. You have put in place half-termly pupil progress meetings and targeted resources at individuals in Year 1 based on their attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. For example, intensive work with small numbers of pupils is helping them to make good progress in mathematics. The action plan for raising attainment in mathematics refers to the target of ensuring that more pupils reach the expected level by the end of Year 2. However, the lack of a more precise success criterion and interim milestones makes it difficult to judge the ambition of the target or evaluate the progress towards the target.
- Parents and carers spoken to during the first visit were pleased with the transition between Reception and Year 1; a few would like a chance to meet with the Year 1 teacher in the summer term. They feel that the school shares useful information with them and are reassured by the school's friendly, welcoming style. However, despite many initiatives undertaken by the school attendance at consultation evenings and curriculum events organised by the school is disappointing. Typically, the

children of those families who do not engage well with the school make less progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- analysing the attainment of groups, including boys and pupils attaining below expected levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and setting clear targets to narrow attainment gaps.
- having sharp and measurable success criteria in improvement planning
- ensuring that phonics sessions are used efficiently and include a sharp focus on developing systematically the pupils' knowledge of the sounds letters make and blending and segmenting these sounds
- involving parents and carers more as partners in their children's learning.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector