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Ms S Bamber
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bamber

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 14 September 2011 and 14 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 Year 1 parents and carers to a questionnaire; two interviews with Year 1 pupils; discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers in Reception and Year 1; scrutiny of relevant documents including data on pupils' progress; and observation of six lessons.

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

Key findings

- Pupils now enter the school with skills and knowledge which are broadly typical for children of their age, but are weaker in aspects of communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. In the past, children have entered the school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. Your drive to improve achievement for all pupils is clear. You have been instrumental in bringing a children's centre to the site, which you manage, and you have established Blue Bears, a pre-school on the site. Close working between

the school, parents and carers and these two agencies has helped to raise the attainment of children before they enter the school.

- Current Year 1 pupils made outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This level of progress continues across Key Stage 1 and pupils' attainment is improving year-on-year, especially in the proportion of pupils attaining above national expectations. Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, also make good or better progress because they are identified early, teachers work closely with parents and carers and provision is very closely matched to their needs.
- Induction procedures are very good on entry to the school. Teachers visit children in all of their settings and the school holds regular network meetings across the year for staff from feeder nurseries and all local childminders. These meetings are attended by staff from every feeder setting. Regular workshops and seminars held for these staff have been instrumental in raising pupils' attainment and parents' and carers' expectations. Procedures to assess children's skills and knowledge on entry are very well embedded and accurate.
- The school provides very good induction at the end of the summer term in Reception for children and parents and carers, to prepare them for the move to Year 1. Reception and Year 1 teachers plan the first four weeks of learning for the Year 1 pupils together. Transition is seamless because pupils know their new teachers well and activities are very closely matched to pupils' individual attainment from the outset. As a consequence, pupils' basic skills develop at a rapid pace. They have many opportunities to practise these basic skills across the week and to work independently.
- A strength of the school is the extremely rich and exciting early years curriculum; the organisation from one class to the next and the use of the outdoor area and school grounds. The curriculum has a discrete focus on topics which continue pupils' personal, social and emotional development throughout Year 1. As a result, the curriculum provides rich opportunities for high-quality learning and extra-curricular activities. Year 1 pupils talked enthusiastically and animatedly about the 'Naughty Bus' initiative in the Reception Year which was a unit of work aimed at raising boys' attainment and also the work they are currently learning about Africa. Parents and carers are very well informed both formally and informally about their child's progress and targets for improvement.
- The new Year 1 classroom and shared outdoor area ensure that pupils feel secure and safe in school and can continue their learning journey from Reception into Year 1 seamlessly. Pupils did not feel that their learning had changed in any way. They are confident pupils who clearly enjoy all aspects of school life. Similarly, parents and carers say that they are very well informed about their child's progress and attainment and how they can support them at home. They feel the school goes 'the extra mile' to keep them informed and on the first visit, only two weeks into the term,

parents and carers could talk knowledgeably about their child's targets for improvement.

- Much of the teaching before, during and after transition is outstanding and never less than good. In the first two terms 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, independent learning and outdoor provision. Evidence from the Early Years Foundation Stage profile is used well to plan topics which fill gaps in pupils' learning. Assessment is rigorous and carried out daily. It informs planning across the week and is used very well to match activities to the needs of all pupil groups.
- Support staff are knowledgeable and are well deployed to work with groups and individuals in lessons, moving pupils' learning forward. The majority of teachers who work in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are leading early years practitioners and share their knowledge with other schools across the local authority. Two of the teachers moderate the work of other schools.
- Pupils' develop their personal, social and emotional skills well as they progress through the school. This is because of the emphasis in classrooms on pupils accessing very good role-play opportunities which are often used as a basis for topic work and developing speaking and listening skills. Pupils behave very well. Teachers' planning takes close account of pupils' different learning styles and, as a result, pupils are engaged in their learning and respond well to adults. In the lessons observed, pupils' attitudes to learning were very well developed. They have formed good relationships with adults and each other.
- The development of transition across the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1 is very high profile across the school. Senior leaders are very knowledgeable about children's early language and mathematical development. They recognise the importance of building on the improvements in Reception attainment and ensuring that good or better progress is maintained. All aspects of transition are monitored closely but the school is not complacent. They identify what is working well and use this information to continually improve all aspects of transition.
- Subject leaders are fully involved in monitoring the progress of pupils during transition. The deputy headteacher is the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and she works closely with Year 1 teachers across the year to check that all pupils are meeting their targets. A very good monitoring system is in place which raises expectations and sets aspirational targets for pupils based on their current rate of progress. This ensures that no pupils fall behind and that attainment gaps between different groups of pupils are narrowing rapidly or have closed completely.
- The very high profile of transition was plain to see across the school. All senior leaders are involved in transition at all levels; from entry to the school; Reception to Year 1; and when pupils leave the school. Careful

consideration is given to meeting the needs of groups and individual pupils at every stage of transition resulting in high achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a whole-school system to record and monitor pupils' personal, social and emotional development beyond Year 1 in a more formal way
- developing further the portfolios of work collected by subject leaders to include exemplars of work from the Early Years Foundation Stage profile

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