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Mr D Scotney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Scotney

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 13 September 2011 and 24 February 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: interviews with Year 1 parents, carers and pupils; discussions with you and the teacher in the mixed-age Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class; scrutiny of relevant documents; observation of four lessons and talking to five Year 1 pupils about their experiences in school.

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

Key findings

- The small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because learning opportunities offered are individualised. Children routinely attend the pre-school setting on the school site. As a result, school staff know them very well when they start in the Reception year. Consequently, no time is lost in continuing children's education. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 1, they attain standards that are well above national expectations and this represents outstanding progress.

- In the one class, which caters for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the Reception children get to know the routines very well. Consequently, when they become Year 1 pupils they know what is expected of them and clear structures and high expectations from adults prepare them for greater independence.
- Parents and carers are exceptionally positive about the transition arrangements. They feel that the move from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1 is seamless because their children stay in the same class, have the same friendship group and are well supported by the Year 2 pupils in the class. They comment that their children relish taking more responsibility as they become Key Stage 1 pupils.
- Communication in school is excellent. Parents and carers are very well informed about the raised expectations in Year 1 and keenly support this by helping their child at home. Parents and carers have daily contact with the class teacher and staff which leads to a continual sharing of information about how well their child is doing. Consequently, there is a real sense of 'partnership' in a continuous transition through the different stages.
- The teacher for the mixed-aged Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class carefully assesses each pupil at the end of every lesson. This is routinely carried out with the teaching assistant who makes a valuable contribution to pupils' ongoing assessments. The assessments are made in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage profile or against National Curriculum expectations, as appropriate to the age and ability of individuals. These assessments monitor pupils' progress and steer planning of subsequent lessons.
- The outstanding teaching for the small group of pupils in Year 1 results from the teacher knowing what has gone before and what comes next in terms of pupils' learning. There are high expectations of what pupils should achieve by the time they move to Year 2. These expectations are set as the norm and reflect the high expectations of pupils' achievement in the Key Stage 2 class.
- The curriculum, which is delivered through different topics, is a key strength and an effective vehicle for developing pupils' competence in literacy and numeracy. The way the curriculum is planned to be progressive within the mixed aged class is a testament to its success. For example, in developing literacy skills children in the Reception Year make story boxes and retell their stories verbally. Pupils in Year 1 use their story boxes as inspiration for developing technical vocabulary, such as using adjectives and adverbs correctly. Pupils in Year 2 use a collective story box to sequence events, using a digital camera, record pictures with captions on the interactive whiteboard using a variety of sentence connectives and present their work to an audience. The sharing of work is a regular occurrence and supports the change of expectation in the transition well from one age group to another.

- Transition from the Reception Year within the class to Year 1 is led very effectively by the class teacher and supported by the senior teachers in the school. They ensure that the individual needs of young children are very well met, which is demonstrated by the pupils' achievement and their enthusiasm for learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to develop the partnership with the pre-school setting in looking at specific areas of learning, such as early numeracy, and how activities planned together can further support children's skills in the Reception Year and on into Year 1.

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

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector