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Mr P Bolger
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bolger

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 17 October 2011 and 1 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: the responses from parents and carers of Year 1 pupils to a questionnaire; interviews with Year 1 parents, carers and pupils; discussions with senior leaders and with teachers in Reception and Year 1; scrutiny of relevant documents such as policies and data regarding the attainment and progress of pupils; and observation of four lessons.

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

Key findings

- The majority of parents and carers strongly agree that arrangements for the transition between Reception and Year 1 are very smooth, very well managed and enable their children to continue making good progress. A typical comment after the first parents' evening in autumn was 'I am really impressed with progress since starting Year 1, his reading, writing and maths have really improved in the short time since the start of the year'. A few parents and carers said they would like more information about the

rooms, teachers, timetable and teaching arrangements before pupils start in Year 1.

- Over time, teaching in Year 1 is high quality and highly effective. In lessons, learning is fast-paced and practical. Teachers skilfully ask open-ended questions to pairs and small groups of pupils so they all have opportunities to think, explain and apply their knowledge. Pupils are highly active throughout the lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and lively, making lessons memorable, captivating and fun. They make use of every opportunity to develop individual pupil's skills and increase pupils' vocabulary and knowledge, particularly of letters and the sounds they make (phonics). All lessons are planned and taught with a strong focus on what each group of pupils needs to learn next rather than from a generic scheme of work.
- Key to the success of the transition is the exceptional way in which the school harmonises the teaching and the curriculum either side of September. Reception teachers skilfully introduce ways of working normally found in Year 1. Year 1 teachers start the year teaching in a style more usually found in Reception. Pupils' groups are maintained in the first term. Pupils continue with their play-based work inside and outdoors and they are involved in short, brisk practical activities. As a result, pupils are confident, settle very quickly, and make quick gains in their emotional and social development.
- A strong element is the team-teaching before and after September and the transition meetings between staff. One set of highly effective meetings is to pass on any pastoral information such as children's personal, social and emotional development, any involvement with outside agencies, identified educational and personal needs and levels of attendance. Importantly this information is used extremely well to plan activities to continue pupils' learning and development. Another set of very useful meetings focus on children's academic needs. This is outstanding because the teachers use the information extremely closely to plan the next activities. Teachers team-teach so they have a direct and first-hand knowledge of the children before they move into Year 1 and Reception teachers team-teach in the autumn so that they are able to check on pupils' progress and learning. This impressive system ensures the level of challenge and expectation in Year 1 is high, and that the continuity of the curriculum and teaching is very smooth, aiding excellent progress across the transition.
- There is a sophisticated, yet easy to understand, system of monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. Year 1 teachers make excellent use of the data from the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan lessons for groups of pupils. This means that while planning activities securely based on the National Curriculum, teachers marry this need with providing activities that are securely based on each child's next stage of development. In mathematics, data are used very effectively by teachers to plan lessons. The mathematics leader has excellent subject knowledge. The data tracks mathematics as a subject rather than the separate strands of counting,

calculation and shape, space and measures. All groups are monitored frequently and in excellent detail to ensure that none falls behind including boys, girls, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those living in a particular postcode and those with different ethnic heritages.

- All groups of pupils make rapid progress. Almost all pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals made outstanding progress. Teachers monitor this group very carefully and devise targeted teaching to ensure that they make accelerated progress. This means that from entering Reception with skills, knowledge and development that are well below the level typical for pupils of this age, by the end of Year 1, they are close to the national average.
- Leaders are highly committed and highly effective in leading and managing the transition. The philosophy is shared and owned by all staff exceptionally well so that everyone knows the role of Year 1 and their place in the transition. The English and mathematics leaders have an excellent understanding of transition issues and of early learning in their subjects. Professional development activity is targeted impressively to aid the transition. The policy and procedures, continually evolving as a result of honest and strategic evaluation, are excellent in improving the transition for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing existing plans to provide better information for all parents and carers about the Year 1 classrooms, teachers and teaching arrangements before pupils transfer into Year 1
- refining the data further by separating mathematics into its different strands.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop transition at your school.

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

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector