

23 April 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Gallowhill Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Renfrewshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

There is a need to raise attainment for all children in literacy and numeracy. There are a range of initiatives in place to support children and staff should evaluate the impact they are having on learning.

At most stages, a range of strategies have been used over the last year to help raise attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school. The school has received effective support from the local authority development officers in literacy and numeracy to help develop staff understanding and improve learning and teaching.

Children are more enthusiastic about reading and attainment in most classes is beginning to improve. Reading strategies are taught well to help children develop their understanding of texts. Staff have improved the range of reading materials available and make good use of the mobile library. As a result, children are developing a love of reading and talk confidently about the books they read. In writing, more children at the early level are being supported to write independently. Older children now have more opportunities for extended writing. Across the school, children are now receiving helpful feedback on how to improve their writing. There are now clearer expectations of the presentation of children's work as agreed by staff and children.

In numeracy and mathematics, children are benefitting from a range of strategies to improve mental mathematics. Most children are now more confident in numeracy. However, there is a need to ensure children are more fluent at their multiplication tables. Staff should ensure that they regularly revisit numeracy topics previously taught to check children's understanding over time.

A range of interventions are in place to help improve attainment in literacy and numeracy for targeted children. These interventions are now monitored more robustly to ensure they focus on raising attainment. Although significant progress has been made, there is a need to ensure a continued focus on raising attainment across the school. Staff should work with the national benchmarks and other schools to ensure they continue to develop skills in making accurate assessments on children achieving a level.

Improve learning, teaching and assessment to ensure the needs of all children are met and they are all are fully engaged in their learning.

The headteacher and staff have worked very well with the local authority to implement a range of actions to improve learning and teaching. Staff have visited other schools, participated in professional learning and made good use of information about children's progress. As a result of this work, learning and teaching across the school has improved. All staff have high expectations of children's behaviour, engagement in learning and attainment. Children understand what is expected of them and are meeting these high expectations. Learning experiences in almost all classes are appropriately challenging. Almost all lessons are well organised with a good use of varied teaching and learning approaches. Across the school, children are engaged and motivated to learn. They work well in groups and are developing a good understanding of their own learning. As they progress with their improvements, staff should ensure that teaching and learning approaches meet the needs of all learners and result in continued improvement in children's attainment.

Relationships across the school are positive. Children are demonstrating improved respect towards each other and are able to work well together. There is a reduction in low-level disruptive behaviour and less conflict in the playground. Children have a good awareness of the recently agreed school values and talk about how these help them in their relationships and learning.

Staff should further develop the curriculum with a clear focus on raising attainment.

The school has refreshed the rationale for the curriculum to ensure it more accurately reflects Curriculum for Excellence and the local context of the school. It would be helpful if this was now more accessible for everyone within the school community. Progression pathways have been introduced in literacy and numeracy to ensure children build on previous learning as they move through the school. There remains a need to provide clear progression pathways in all curricular areas as a matter of urgency. This would ensure children are able to make appropriate progress and build on previous learning more effectively across all subject areas.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy within topics are planned for more effectively. We provided advice on forward planning for learning within topics across Curriculum for Excellence levels. In planning for topics, we suggest that the school provides opportunities to be responsive to children's interests and be able to respond to local circumstances more fully. There has been good progress made on increasing outdoor learning across the school and this is being used effectively to provide real life contexts to apply learning in numeracy. Through the World of Work Week, staff have provided children with opportunities to develop an understanding of skills needed in future careers. There is now a clearer focus on using the curriculum to raise attainment. As a result, most children are making better progress in their learning. There is scope to improve the curriculum and subsequent attainment further across the school.

The school should improve how they track the progress children are making in their learning and use the information to plan next steps.

The senior leadership team, together with staff, have developed an assessment calendar which details the range of improved approaches to assessing children's progress and attainment. In addition, teachers are making appropriate use of assessments to judge progress in the course of learning and teaching. Staff have participated in activities with other schools to develop their understanding of progress and attainment. As a result, they are more confident about the levels in which children are working and the progress they are making. This helps them identify interventions to support children who face additional challenges. Attainment meetings between teaching staff and the senior leadership team are used well to ensure children are being challenged appropriately. As a result, children's attainment is beginning to improve at most stages of the school. Children are more involved in assessing their own progress through learning conversations and target setting.

What happens next?

The school has made very good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Renfrewshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Monica McGeever
HM Inspector