

18 February 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Dalbeattie Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Dumfries and Galloway 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.

**Put in place rigorous approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and nursery to ensure that children have better learning experiences.**

Staff have made strong progress in taking forward this area of improvement across the school and nursery. There are now rigorous approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and nursery. All children benefit from better learning experiences. The headteacher now works closely with the nursery manager to monitor and evaluate effectively the work of the nursery.

The headteacher has developed a clear calendar of activities for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and nursery. All senior leaders fulfil well their clear roles and responsibilities to support this work. Senior leaders in the school and nursery now monitor learning and teaching, planning for children's learning, children's work and attainment and progress more regularly and rigorously. Children now benefit from better, well-planned learning and teaching in the school and nursery. Children's work is of a higher standard, they are making better progress, and attainment in literacy and numeracy is improving. Senior leaders make effective use of newly developed frameworks for high-quality learning and teaching to ensure consistency in these monitoring activities. They provide staff with clear feedback and points for action. Teachers and practitioners welcome this high level of challenge and support. As a result, across the school and nursery all children now experience a better range of more meaningful and relevant learning experiences.

All staff work well together to identify and take forward key priorities for improvement. They seek the views of children and parents to inform the key priorities. Children benefit from and enjoy evaluating the work of the school with the headteacher during weekly 'Friday Focus' group meetings. Senior leaders monitor the progress of improvement in the key areas closely through regular meetings with staff. They should extend this further to include children and parents. The pace of change and improvement across the school and nursery is now at an appropriately brisk pace.

**Across the school improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching. Staff should provide more challenging tasks and activities so that children are more motivated, and attainment improves.**

Teachers have made effective progress in improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school.

Children in P7 led a review and refresh of the school and nursery vision and values. Staff and children now demonstrate well the values of kind, responsible, respected, included and committed in their daily actions and interactions. Children say behaviour across the school has improved and that most children are now kinder and more considerate.

All teachers are developing well a shared understanding of key features of effective learning and teaching. Children are now clear about the purpose of their learning and how they can be successful. They benefit from clear instructions and explanations of their learning from teachers. Teachers are developing their skills in asking a range of questions to extend children's thinking. Children now experience and work well together in a range of whole class, group and individual learning tasks and activities. Across the school, children are more motivated and engage well in their learning almost all of the time. There is much greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching.

All staff have a strong focus on raising children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. Teachers and senior leaders meet regularly to discuss children's progress and attainment. They identify gaps in children's learning and provide targeted support to close such gaps. This is helping to raise attainment in all aspects of literacy and numeracy across the school. Moving forward, all staff should ensure all children experience increased challenge in their learning.

**Across the school and nursery, all staff need to improve approaches to assessment. They need to develop a clear assessment framework to help them gather reliable evidence about children's progress. They need to use data about children's progress better to help them to plan for children's learning effectively.**

Senior leaders and staff have made positive progress in this area for improvement across the school and nursery.

In the school, teachers worked together to develop a framework for assessment. They now assess children's progress regularly in literacy and numeracy using a range of assessments. They use the data gathered well to inform their planning of children's learning. Teachers and senior leaders meet four times a year to track and monitor children's attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy effectively. They now have a strong focus on raising children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. This is helping them to plan for children's learning more effectively.

In the nursery, all practitioners engaged fully in professional learning about observing and assessing children's skills and learning. They now observe children closely as they play and learn and make skilful observations of learning in children's personal learning plans. This helps them to identify children's next steps and plan future learning. Senior leaders introduced termly attainment meetings with practitioners to track and monitor children's

progress in literacy and numeracy or developmental milestones. This is helping practitioners to be clear of the progress children are making, and plan for children's learning effectively. Moving forward, practitioners need to develop strategies to ensure children know and understand their own next steps for learning to help them make even better progress. Across the school and nursery, all staff should work more closely together and with colleagues in other establishments and settings to moderate their professional judgements about children's progress.

**In the nursery, staff need to improve the overall quality of learning and teaching. Staff should develop play environments which offer children stimulating learning experiences and ensure all children make very good progress in learning.**

Overall, there has been strong progress in this area for development. The quality of learning and teaching in the nursery has significantly improved.

All practitioners have engaged fully in a wide range of professional learning to help them improve the play environments, and the quality of learning and teaching. They have developed a welcoming, attractive playroom environment and outdoor area. As planned, they should further develop the outdoor area. Children now access a wide range of age-appropriate resources throughout the day, indoors and in the outdoor area. Practitioners carefully observe children's play and discuss their learning with them. This helps practitioners to plan activities and experiences which children engage with enthusiastically and for extended periods of time. Practitioners use their observations of children's learning well to provide experiences which help children to build on prior learning. Following engagement with professional learning, all practitioners now ask a range of questions which require children to explain their thinking and share their opinions. As a result, children are improving their skills in this area.

Children enjoy the more regular use of the local environment for learning, such as visits to the local shops. This is helping children to develop life skills, such as using money or road safety. Children engage very well in the newly developed play environments, and most are making good progress in their learning. A few children are making very good progress.

### What happens next?

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

Katharine Crombie  
HM Inspector