

5 February 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Knowepark Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Scottish Borders 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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.

In consultation with the school community, refresh the vision, values and aims of the school and nursery class to bring about a clear direction to ensure continuous improvement.

The headteacher and staff are making very good progress in its approaches to continuous improvement. They have consulted widely to refresh the school's vision and values. Partnership working is a strength of the school and partners feel valued for their contributions. This has led to a shared understanding of what the school wants to achieve for children. Across the school and nursery class, the impact of the shared understanding of the school's values has led to children being respectful and taking greater responsibilities for their behaviour and contribution to the wider work of the school. The nursery class and practitioners are included effectively in whole school developments. This is ensuring the early learning provision supports the school's aims for all children and their families. The headteacher demonstrates strong leadership of change. The headteacher and staff have taken well-judged steps to ensure teamwork leads to shared leadership responsibilities. Staff are fully committed to positive outcomes for children and have worked collaboratively in a range of ways to support the school going forward. They are motivated by opportunities to widen the scope of their professional learning. We have asked that they continue to evaluate the impact of initiatives on children's attainment and achievement.

Improve the consistency of high quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school. Review the playroom environment of the nursery class to facilitate more effective learning and teaching.

Overall, the school is making good progress in this aspect of its work. The headteacher and staff have worked tirelessly to develop consistency in high quality learning and teaching across the school and nursery class. In most lessons, relationships are positive and children are motivated by their learning. Almost all children listen attentively and respond confidently to questions. Teachers use questioning well to check for children's understanding. In most lessons teachers use their knowledge of children's progress to group them appropriately to match their learning needs. Teachers work closely with support staff to provide additional help for those requiring it. In most lessons the pace of learning is sufficiently brisk and engages children well in their learning. Children are developing skills in self-evaluation and peer assessment. This is leading to them being clear about standards and expectations.

Teachers use a variety of approaches to provide helpful feedback to children. Overall, expectations of what children can achieve are higher. However, there remains further work to achieve continuity and progression in learning and teaching across all stages. The formation of the digital leader group is promoting the increased use of GLOW blogs to share learning with parents and the wider community. The nursery environment, P1 classrooms and the outdoors have undergone significant improvement. The nursery environment enables children to develop their ideas and use their imaginations well. Children co-operate as they learn, make choices about where they would like to play and are developing responsibility while helping with nursery routines. The improved maintenance of the school's interior, such as the school hall, has enhanced the learning environment and makes for a pleasant place in which to learn and work.

Through meeting the wellbeing, inclusion and learning needs of all children raise attainment at the primary stages and secure greater progress for children in the nursery class.

The importance of wellbeing is a strong feature of the school. Children have a very good understanding of the importance of wellbeing and resilience and the positive impact these have on their readiness to learn. Almost all children understand what wellbeing means to them and know what supports are available should they require them. The strong focus on health and wellbeing across the school and nursery class, is having a positive impact on children's development and relationships. They have a growing understanding of the wellbeing indicators and the use of 'wellbeing buddy' characters is supporting the youngest children well. Wider achievements are recognised and celebrated through school assemblies and children's individual 'learning journey' jotters. Children are proud of various responsibilities and their contribution to the bronze award for Rights Respecting Schools and a silver Schools Sports Award. Overall, most children are making good progress from their prior Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English. Most children are structuring writing with skill and good understanding of a variety of purposes. They read for enjoyment and research topics of interest. The focus on phonics and spelling is showing early signs of improved fluency in reading and accuracy in writing. Almost all children listen attentively and are motivated to learn. Most children are benefiting from the framework teachers use for developing numeracy. They are increasingly applying their skills in numeracy to real life contexts and should now ensure developing skills in mathematics has an equally strong focus. Mental agility is developing very well. We have asked that the headteacher and staff across the school and nursery class continue to build on their positive work leading to improvement and ensure the best possible progress for all children.

What happens next?

The school has made 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. Scottish Borders Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector