

28 August 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

**Hillhead Primary School
East Ayrshire Council**

In November 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and East Ayrshire 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.

Develop more effective self-evaluation approaches which lead to improved outcomes for all children at Hillhead Primary School.

Overall, there has been good progress in taking forward this area for improvement. Although there are a number of temporary acting leadership posts, the headteacher has provided strong strategic direction in a number of important aspects of school practice and provision. The pace of change has been accelerated and there are emerging signs of improvement.

Staff have worked very well together with the support of senior leaders, in taking forward aspects for improvement, such as health and wellbeing and outdoor learning. They are more reflective of their practice and are using national framework documents such as "How good is our school?" (4th Edition).

There remains further scope to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school.

Overall, the headteacher has introduced more effective approaches to monitor the work of the school, with self-evaluation for improvement playing a more prominent role. Children now play a more active role in evaluating school practice. There are more regular classroom observations focusing on the 'excellent lesson' developed by staff, children and parents. Further time is required for senior leaders and staff to evidence the impact of interventions on improved outcomes for learners.

Continue to improve learning and teaching across the school, ensuring an appropriate level of pace, challenge and differentiation. Children should be given opportunities to lead their own learning and be more involved in evaluating their own progress and next steps.

We found an improvement in the engagement of children in their learning. Most children now engage well in lessons and enjoy their learning. Expectations for most learners are higher and the school motto of 'high hopes' is one that the headteacher and depute headteacher reinforce on a regular basis. Teachers still need to ensure that tasks and activities are appropriately challenging across all stages in order to support all children to make the best possible progress in their learning.

Children do not know themselves as learners sufficiently enough. There is still work to be undertaken in providing children with more effective feedback so that they are more aware of their strengths and next steps in learning.

Teachers should continue to engage in discussions around effective learning and teaching to further develop their practice. Children would benefit from higher quality and more consistent learners' experiences.

Develop a school curriculum that is relevant, meets the needs of all learners and supports children to develop knowledge and skills across all curriculum areas.

Further work is required in taking forward the curriculum. This remains an important area for improvement.

There is now a need to proceed with plans to develop a curriculum overview that takes account of the context of the school and meets fully the needs of children. As they develop the curriculum, senior leaders and staff should continue to ensure that children receive their full entitlement to a broad general education.

Work has been undertaken to ensure courses and programmes are in place for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff should continue to ensure that children build on their learning as they progress through the school. Staff are benefitting from developing their understanding of shared standards and expectations. This should be used to support children to attain high standards.

Almost all staff are exploring ways in which outdoor learning can enhance learning experiences across the curriculum and for targeted groups of children. Children are responding well to these experiences.

Through meeting the wellbeing, inclusion and learning needs of all children, raise attainment and achievement across all primary stages.

Overall there has been variable progress in taking this forward. While approaches to wellbeing have improved, this has not yet resulted in improvements to attainment and achievement.

The school's vision, values and aims are increasingly underpinning the work and life of Hillhead Primary. There is further work required to ensure that bullying and children's sense of safety is fully explored and understood and incidents are appropriately resolved and recorded.

The depute headteacher has worked effectively to ensure compliance with legislation and statutory duties. There is strong practice in identifying the additional support needs of children. There is further work required to ensure that support plans are of high quality and include effective targets. These plans now need to be evaluated more rigorously and robustly to ensure that children experience success and appropriate progress in their learning.

Senior leaders have been successful in improving attendance, reducing latecoming and significantly reducing exclusions.

Continue to develop approaches across the school for planning, assessment and moderation. This should include robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress in learning and achievement whilst ensuring staff set high expectations.

Progress in taking forward approaches to planning teaching, learning and assessment is limited. Assessment is not yet integral to planning for effective learning. The school should move forward with its plans to support staff in selecting assessment approaches which are fit for purpose and which generate a wide range of assessment evidence of learning.

The school should continue to develop a clear and shared understanding of assessment for learning. This will enable staff to understand why and how they can use approaches effectively to support children in taking responsibility for their learning and in making progress in their learning.

The school has adopted the local authority tracking and monitoring system. This should now be used to identify children who require support or challenge in their learning. Parents would benefit from having more awareness of children's targets as well as how to support learning.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with East Ayrshire Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 18 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss East Ayrshire Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Dennise Sommerville
HM Inspector

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