

8 March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bowmore Primary School and Nursery Class  
Argyll and Bute Council**

In January 2015, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. 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 how the school has continued 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 how well children are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

**How well do children learn and achieve?**

Children in both nursery classes and across the primary stages continue to enjoy their learning. Most children demonstrate high levels of motivation and respond well to the opportunities they have to lead their own learning. In nursery classes for both Gaelic and English, children are settled and enjoy warm relationships with staff. Children now make more decisions about where they would like to play both in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. In both nursery classes, children are becoming increasingly independent as they prepare their own paints and make their own playdough. Children are consulted about their learning which is recorded in the newly developed learning logs and through the use of floor books. At the primary stages, children in both English and Gaelic Medium Education are well-mannered and are respectful to each other in class. Children are using their learning logs to help them reflect on their learning. We have asked staff to continue to develop children's understanding of themselves as learners so that children are clearer about what their strengths are and what they have to do to improve. The school's Gaelic Choir enjoys great success in local and national competitions. Children continue to respond well to the opportunities they have to take on roles of responsibility within the school. A group of children proudly shared their involvement in planning and organising the school's Christmas party and pantomime. We have asked the school to continue to increase this type of activity which enables more children to lead school improvement.

In both nursery classes children listen well and talk confidently to each other, adults and visitors. In the playroom for those learning through English, children seek out adults with whom to share books. Most children can identify their favourite book and re-tell parts of the story. They make good use of recipe books to make their own

cakes. Children now regularly write as part of their play. Outdoors, they enjoy making marks using chalks. In the nursery class for those learning through Gaelic, children continue to progress well in their understanding of Gaelic. Older children are beginning to embed Gaelic words within their communication. Within daily routines such as snack time, all children use Gaelic words with ease. We have asked staff to interact more with children as they play, to help extend even further children's learning of Gaelic in a full range of situations. In both the nursery classes, children's understanding of numeracy and mathematics is developing well. There are more examples of children using numbers and mathematical language as part of their play. Across the primary stages, children continue to make satisfactory progress in literacy, English language, Gaelic, and numeracy and mathematics. Children engage well in group discussions, taking turns and building respectfully on ideas of their peers. Children are proud of and make good use of their newly developed library area. Commendably, children have been involved in shaping this new area. At the early stages, children display a good understanding of number by, matching numbers to amounts and ordering numbers. Staff are developing their approaches to assessment to help them have a clearer picture of children's progress. We have asked that they continue to develop approaches to tracking and monitoring to ensure all children make appropriate progress.

### **How well does the school support children to develop and learn?**

Across the school, staff continue to provide a calm, nurturing environment for children. Children who require additional help with their learning are well-supported. At the primary stages, staff have introduced new approaches to provide greater challenge in learning for children. There is still scope to ensure that higher achieving children are appropriately challenged in their learning. At all stages, staff have been improving how they organise and deliver the curriculum. Staff now plan opportunities for children to link their learning across curricular areas with a focus on literacy, development of skills and assessment. This approach allows children to better apply their knowledge and skills in new contexts. More relevant and interesting contexts also enable children to relate better to the purpose of learning. For example, older pupils talked about the skills and qualities required for the roles they undertook in planning and organising the pantomime. Children and parents appreciate the opportunities that are now in place for children to showcase and share their learning. Staff have created helpful displays around the school which present learning in an attractive and informative way. It is pleasing to see that there is now a planned approach to learning across the early level. Staff now plan regularly together and there is consistency in the use of floor books to engage children in their learning, build on prior learning and show progression. The use of Gaelic in English Medium Education classes is resulting in a better understanding of Gaelic language. We agree with staff that they should now have a whole-school project on Gaelic language and culture to share and celebrate this special feature of Bowmore Primary School's curriculum. Children in the Gaelic Medium classes could take a lead role in planning this project. Across the school, staff have taken a few positive steps to improve the curriculum. There are early indications that these are beginning to impact positively on children's progress however, there remains great scope for improvement. Clear leadership is still required to ensure clarity around what children are learning and how this builds into a coherent, progressive picture of children's learning and into Islay High School. Staff also need to be making stronger

and more consistent use of approaches to immersion to help improve further the attainment of children in Gaelic Medium Education.

### **How well does the school improve the quality of its work?**

An acting headteacher was appointed to the school in February. She has worked very hard to support staff to take forward improvements within the school by creating a more positive ethos. Most parents comment favourably on the positive changes that have taken place since the acting headteacher took up post. She is ably supported by the highly effective acting principal teacher. As a class teacher, the acting principal teacher is a very good role model for staff. Staff continue to work very hard. It is pleasing to observe that all staff across the school share the same commitment to improving learning in Bowmore Primary School. They are rightly proud of the improvements they have made so far. Staff support each other well and welcome opportunities to learn from each other. They benefit from working alongside their colleagues in local schools. A few staff are beginning to take on specific leadership roles to improve aspects of the school. This is an area which could be extended further. We have asked that children also take a greater role in school improvement. We discussed with staff how they might develop this further. To help secure continuous improvements we have asked staff to improve their approaches to evaluating and monitoring the work of the school. For Gaelic Medium Education, staff across all stages should review their practice using resources such as the *Advice on Gaelic Education*. Across the school, staff need to continue to establish more consistent approaches to tracking children's progress in learning and attainment. This is particularly important when introducing new developments and initiatives. The school needs to have a clearer picture of the impact such developments are having on children's progress and achievements. Current approaches are not yet effective.

### **What happens next?**

The school has made some notable improvements since the last inspection. There is still a number of aspects within key areas for improvement agreed at the original inspection in 2014 that require further improvement. As such we are not yet satisfied with the quality of provision. As a result, our Area Lead Officer will work with Argyll and Bute Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out another further inspection within one year of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Jackie Maley  
HM Inspector

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