



Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba



**Donaldson's
Linlithgow
27 September 2016**

Contents

1. Background
2. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?
3. How well does the school support children and young people to develop and learn?
4. How well does the school improve the quality of its work?
5. What happens next?

1. Background

In December 2013 HM Inspectors and Care Inspectorate Inspectors published a report on your child's school. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published further reports in July 2014, December 2014 and September 2015. Since the last inspection, a new education staff team has been appointed. The roles of the Board of Governors and the Principal have changed and they have been re-named. They are now known as The Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The school roll is now 24 and the forecast for August 2016 is 14. Recent complaints against the school had highlighted concerns about leadership, management of challenging behaviour of children and young people, staffing compliment and skills, transition planning and quality of learning experiences. The Care Inspectorate carried out an inspection of the school care accommodation service in the Lodge and reported in March 2016. During this inspection by Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate carried out a further inspection of the Lodge and this will be reported separately.

Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. This inspection considered progress in relation to actions taken by the school to address the concerns related to two parental complaints. The inspection also focused on progress on the further action taken by the school in response to the Section 66C Preliminary Notice of 14 November 2014. During our visit, we talked to children and young people and worked closely with the school. We heard from the CEO, Trustees 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 school. As a result, we were able to find out how well children and young people are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This report sets out what we found.

2. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Children and young people are now more focused and attentive during their lessons. The majority show more interest in what they are learning, and are much more settled in class and around the school. The majority of children continue to be more actively engaged in their learning and there is much less low-level disruption as a result. The school should continue to build on the good progress they have made in introducing more active approaches to learning so that all children and young people benefit. Children's learning experiences are much more meaningful and engaging. For example, at the primary stages, outdoor learning and real-life contexts such as cooking and gardening activities are helping children to apply their learning in real situations. At the secondary stages, young people have enjoyed learning about the European Union referendum. They have developed their political literacy skills and knowledge in a real-life way by organising their own referendum in school, with proxy and postal votes. Most children and young people are benefitting from a wider range of teaching approaches which is enhancing their learning experiences. The school should continue to extend their use of different teaching approaches to help children and young people become more independent learners.

3. How well does the school support children and young people to develop and learn?

The care and welfare of children and young people has been a top priority for the school since Education Scotland's last visit. Good progress has been made by the school in developing staff skills in managing challenging behaviour and in implementing systems and processes to make sure that children and young people are kept safe. Staff have a better understanding of the differing needs of children and young people, and are more alert to potential triggers and factors that may lead to critical incidents. They have more confidence in applying suitable strategies to prevent situations from occurring or reducing their severity. The number of incidents involving pupil-on-pupil

behaviour has decreased significantly over the course of the year. Reductions can be attributed to increased staff knowledge and skills, and to a change in the pupil population. The school should ensure that staff continue to have high-level training in managing challenging behaviour. Information about incidents is shared between school and the Lodge staff. Importantly, staff now review any incidents collaboratively, and use the outcomes from discussions to inform future practice. Communication with parents about learning and teaching and day-to-day incidents is improving.

Children's and young people's learning needs are being better met and a wider range of teaching approaches and resources are being used. Consideration should be made to ensure that all tasks match the needs of all learners. Children and young people have individual targets which are regularly reviewed and shared with parents and other professionals. Children and young people benefit from close working relationships between therapy and support staff, teachers, and care staff. Further on-going total communication training would be beneficial for all staff to ensure that deaf children and those with communication difficulties have their needs met. Children are benefitting from improved transition arrangements from class-to-class and from school to home. Arrangements for post-school transitions are also improving. However, because of the high number of children and young people requiring careful planning for their transition to other schools and provision this year, the planning was not always of a consistently high quality.

The school is aware of the need to develop the curriculum further. They have started to plan and deliver a wider range of health and wellbeing programmes such as personal relationships, substance misuse, emotions and keeping healthy. A sexual health programme is also being developed currently. Children's targets and the curriculum are informed by the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence.

4. How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

Since November 2014, the Trustees have been closely tracking and monitoring the progress made by the school on the actions identified in their improvement plan. They have provided greater clarity about the vision for the school and Donaldson's Trust which is to ensure that more children, young people and others benefit from the Trust's legacy. The vision has been shared and agreed by all Trust members and the CEO. The vision has allowed them to think more creatively about how they can extend services to make the Trust sustainable in the future. They have been clear about the roles and responsibilities of the CEO and have worked well together to examine viable options for future provision. They have actively sought views from a wide range of stakeholders to identify possible gaps in provision both nationally and locally. Their consultation has already resulted in the appointment of a senior youth worker to lead a transition service using evidence-based practice. The appointment has already begun to make an impact; for example, by helping staff to identify better the needs of young people using a person-centred planning approach. The Trust is supporting developments by appointing two additional members of staff and agreeing an evaluation strategy in consultation with The University of Dundee. Regular and minuted meetings with the Trustees are helping to provide appropriate levels of accountability, support and challenge to the school. Very good support continues to be provided by the Trust to the CEO. There is strong evidence of a more stable and collaborative relationship between the Trust and CEO.

The Trust and CEO have implemented a radical programme of change during the academic year from August 2015. This has resulted in significant changes to staffing, organisational structures and pupil population. The management of the staffing changes was challenging but as a result of the focused leadership from the CEO with the support of the Board of Trustees, the school is now beginning to benefit from a much more motivated and trusting staff team. The Board of Trustees and CEO have also agreed a very clear admissions policy to determine which children's and young people's needs can be met by the current Donaldson's School provision. As a result of changes to the admissions policy, the Lodge will be made inactive in

August 2016, since all young people who are current residents will have moved on to alternative provision.

The significant change in staffing, both of teaching and support staff over the past year, has brought a different blend of skills to the school. An audit of staff's skills has been carried out by promoted staff and a programme of training and professional learning has been implemented. In addition, the professional review and development process for teachers, and the supervision of care and support staff, has identified specific areas of strength and areas for personal and professional development which is being overseen by the CEO.

The school has been without a headteacher since September 2015. The Trust was unable to appoint a suitably skilled headteacher and as a result, has established a leadership team to run the day-to-day operation of the school and the Lodge. The leadership team are very well supported by interim managers, two of whom have been employed on a temporary basis to support the substantive leadership team. They have been working with the leadership team on, for example, the development of leadership skills, the implementation of self-evaluation systems, processes and approaches, transition strategies and improvements to safeguarding practices. Despite this, further improvement is required to build operational day-to-day leadership capacity, particularly in relation to leadership of learning. Greater clarity is required for all staff about the leadership team's individual roles and responsibilities. Going forward, the leadership team needs to be able to function independently of the interim managers.

The school has started to develop a self-evaluation framework, but limited progress has been made since the last inspection in putting this into action. Due to changes in the leadership team, the appointment of a suitably qualified child protection officer will be required for the start of the new academic year in August 2016.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and Board of Trustees:

- Improve the leadership team’s capacity to lead learning and manage the day-to-day operation of the school.
- Implement a robust quality improvement framework.
- Further improve staff’s skills to meet the needs of the children and young people now attending the school and ensure that the communication needs of the deaf continue to be met.
- Continue to improve transition arrangements for all children and young people, particularly post-school transitions.
- Further develop the curriculum to ensure progression, depth and challenge.

5. What happens next?

The school has made the necessary improvements in relation to seven out of eight recommendations to which Education Scotland made reference to Scottish Ministers under Section 66B of the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980* (the 1980 Act) on 14 November 2014 which resulted in Ministers issuing a Preliminary Notice under Section 66C on the same day. However, insufficient progress has been made to some aspects of the areas of improvement identified in previous inspections and one area in the Preliminary Notice. In particular, further improvement is required in relation to the capacity of the leadership team to lead learning and manage the day-to-day operation of the school. HM Inspectors will report these findings to Scottish Ministers who will, informed by our recommendations, consider whether further action is required. Education Scotland will continue to engage with the school to support them to secure improvement and implement the recommendations made in this report. Unless directed otherwise by the Scottish Ministers, Education Scotland will return in a years’ time to carry out a further inspection.

HM Inspector:
Dr. Laura-Ann Currie

Care Inspector:
Iain Lamb

If you would like to receive this report in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Crown Copyright 2016
Education Scotland