

19 January 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

Coalsnaughton Primary School and Nursery Class Clackmannanshire Council

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including the ethos and culture of the school and partnership working. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children in the nursery enjoy their learning and are developing an awareness of themselves and others as they learn to take turns and share. As a result of improvements to the learning environment, they are now beginning to access their own activities independently. Children respond well when given some responsibility for aspects of their learning, such as organising their snack. We have asked staff to be clearer about what children are expected to learn at particular activities and how they will assess children's progress. At the primary stages, the school ethos is now based on mutual respect and is creating a more positive learning environment for children. We found that children contribute well to the life of the school through a range of groups, for example, the sports committee and the Pupil Council. Children are proud of their 'secret garden' and achieving their Sport Scotland Silver Award. They enjoy the range of sporting opportunities available to them such as skiing lessons and visits to The Peak for climbing. Older children are beginning to develop their leadership skills through, for example, taking on roles as buddies and peer mediators. The school should continue with its plans to develop and implement learning journals to help children better understand and talk about their learning and progress. We have asked the school to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school. For example, staff need to involve children more in making better choices about their learning and consistently ask what they are learning from their experiences.

Across the nursery class and primary stages, children respond well to having their achievements celebrated in a range of ways such as through assemblies and the 'star jar'. In the nursery, children are becoming more confident in talking about their own interests and enjoy stories and looking at books. We have asked staff to ensure there is a clearer focus placed on developing all children's early language and literacy. For

example, children need increased opportunities in different areas of the nursery to develop their early writing skills. A few children show interest in numbers. Early numeracy skills now need to be introduced more frequently through play and daily routines. Across the primary stages, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy requires improvement. Staff now need to increase their expectations of what children can achieve so that they are consistently high and ambitious enough to develop children's skills better. Children now need to be taught early literacy skills with greater rigour to ensure the pace of learning is appropriate. The majority of children are able to discuss books they enjoy reading and older children are developing their research skills appropriately. We have asked staff to help children to develop a wider range of reading skills. Across the primary stages there is considerable scope to encourage children to write more frequently and at greater length. In numeracy and mathematics, most children do not yet have a sound enough knowledge of important mathematical concepts and ideas. As a result, they have difficulty applying their learning to solve problems. Across the school, children are gaining confidence in completing written calculations. However, they are not able to talk confidently about their mathematical thinking or answer oral questions quickly. A few older children are beginning to apply their learning in real life contexts, such as their organisation of the stationery shop. Across the nursery class and primary stages, children are learning to appreciate what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They can talk about keeping themselves safe in a variety of situations and are becoming more confident in discussing their feelings and emotions.

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

In the nursery class and across the primary stages, staff show high levels of care and consideration for children. Relationships between staff and children are positive and staff are aware of individual family circumstances. There is an inclusive ethos where everyone is made to feel welcome and staff are responsive to individual children's emotional needs. The school works well with a range partners to help support children and their families. The chill out zone provides a safe space for children to talk about their feelings with a member of staff. However, there are some important weaknesses in the school's arrangements to meeting children's learning needs across the primary stages. Tasks, activities and resources are not matched well enough to children's learning needs. Teachers need to use assessment evidence better to plan learning experiences which build on children's existing skills and knowledge. Learning plans are in place for the children who require them, but there is not always evidence of these being used effectively enough in helping children to improve. Staff now need to work better together to fully meet the range of children's learning needs in their classes.

Across the nursery class and primary stages, staff are now beginning to develop a common understanding of Curriculum for Excellence. In the nursery class, the curriculum is delivered through play and relevant use is made of the local community to support learning. Staff are beginning to change their planning to respond better to children's interests. They now need to develop their approaches to assessing and recording children's progress through individual learning journals. At the primary stages, teachers have adopted curricular programmes to plan learning which are beginning to ensure a more progressive experience for children over time. In English and literacy and numeracy and mathematics, teachers have worked together to create

new programmes of work to help children build on their previous learning. Positive steps are being made to improve the health and wellbeing curriculum to support the emotional wellbeing and resilience of children. Overall, however, the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence is significantly behind national expectations. In a few curriculum areas, there are not yet programmes of learning in place. As a result, there are significant gaps in children's learning. The school needs to ensure that all children are able to make suitable progress across all curriculum areas and receive the support and challenge to which they are entitled.

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

Coalsnaughton Primary School and Nursery Class have experienced a number of staffing issues in recent years. This has had an impact on the overall progress of improvement and the attainment and achievement of children. At all stages, there are important weaknesses in the quality of children's achievement and attainment over time. Since the appointment of the new headteacher in January 2014, she has worked very hard to develop relationships within the local community. She has gained the support and respect of parents, children and staff. Through partnership with you, she has made significant improvements to the behaviour across the school and has created a caring and supportive ethos. Children now show care and respect towards all staff and each other. Staff value the support and leadership provided by the headteacher and are now working more effectively as a team to make the necessary improvements for your children. The headteacher has a more appropriate range of ways now in place to monitor the work of the school. Much work remains to be done, particularly in the overall quality of children's learning experiences and raising their attainment to ensure the recent positive start is bringing about improvements which can be built upon and sustained. Staff now take part in relevant professional learning activities and these are now more focussed on planned improvements to help improve learning and teaching and delivering the curriculum.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the school had no requirements and ten recommendations. From these, seven recommendations have been met/or partially addressed. Outstanding issues relating to children's learning journals and audit systems are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and three recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Children who are proud of their school and show care and concern towards each other.
- The leadership of the headteacher in creating the strong, caring ethos across the nursery class and school.
- The work with parents and partners to develop the positive environment for learning across the nursery class and school.

We discussed with staff and Clackmannanshire Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve children's progress and attainment in English and literacy and in numeracy and mathematics.

- Ensure the learning needs of all children are effectively met.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure children build on their knowledge and skills as they progress through the school.
- Ensure approaches to self-evaluation lead to year on year improvement in children's learning and progress.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Clackmannanshire Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a 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.

Louise Turnbull
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at

[http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/Coal
snaughtonPrimarySchoolClackmannanshire.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/Coal%20snaughtonPrimarySchoolClackmannanshire.asp)

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