

8 March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Hoddum Primary School and Nursery Class  
Dumfries and Galloway 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 ways in which your children have a say about their school, sharing their learning with you 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?**

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, most children have a positive learning experience. Children in the nursery class are happy and enthusiastic about their play activities. They are developing skills in sharing and cooperating with one another. Some are developing independence through dressing themselves to go outdoors and serving drinks at snack time. We have asked nursery staff to raise their expectations further of what children can achieve, and involve children more in planning relevant learning and setting goals for their achievement. At the primary stages, most children are eager to learn and almost all tell us they enjoy school. Almost all say staff encourage them to do well and that they are becoming more confident. Staff are planning to provide children with more regular opportunities to learn outdoors and build on children's growing awareness of their local environment. Children work well cooperatively when given the opportunity to share ideas in groups. In the main, too many lessons involve whole classes following instructions given by teachers. The school should take steps to ensure children are more actively involved in their learning. Many teachers shared what they wanted children to learn but did not give them enough feedback on how well they had achieved. We have asked the school to improve its approaches to assessing how well children learn and how to help them improve. Staff have made a positive start to providing children with opportunities to be involved in developing aspects of the school's work. The children's 'health group' has successfully raised children's awareness of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. However, the school's approaches to managing children's behaviour in the playground needs to be more effective. Staff should continue to develop ways in which children can be expected to take greater responsibilities. Children are achieving success in a

range of out of school activities and enjoy having their successes recognised at assemblies.

At the primary stages, all children participate in mixed stage groups to take a lead in developing and sharing the school's focus on charities and the community. We have asked the school to create opportunities for nursery children to be included in the work of these pupil groups. Older children are proud to be 'Buddies' of the nursery children and fulfil their roles very successfully. In the nursery, children are making satisfactory progress in early language and mathematics. They are developing an understanding that writing has a purpose and are beginning to write their names. In their play activities, they can use the names of shapes when making a fire-engine and are beginning to link their energetic play to their understanding of keeping healthy. At the primary stages, children are making satisfactory progress in developing literacy skills. The school has successfully taken steps to improve attainment in reading and should now ensure children continue to build on their progress. The quality of writing at the primary stages is too variable and children should be expected to achieve consistently high standards. At the primary stages, children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. They are developing confidence in using numbers and making calculations. However, the school should ensure that children's knowledge of mathematics is developed at a brisker pace and continually builds on their prior learning. Children in P6/7 are gaining skills for life and work through their enterprise topic and understand the concepts of profit and loss. They are also gaining skills of independence and resilience through their participation in residential excursions.

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

Overall, the school's arrangements for meeting children's learning needs are satisfactory. In the nursery, staff provide a range of play activities that meet the needs of the majority of children. Nursery staff have begun to observe and assess children's progress but now need to ensure they plan children's next steps in learning more effectively. At the primary stages, in the majority of lessons teachers and support staff take careful account of individual learning needs by providing well-matched learning activities. However, there is scope for more lessons to offer greater opportunity for children to learn in groups and for the pace and challenge of learning to be improved. Children who have individualised education targets would benefit further if staff and partners supporting their learning, planned together more effectively. The school should review its systems and processes to identify, monitor and review children's needs to ensure all children achieve as highly as possible. Staff have accurately identified the need to involve parents more fully in their children's learning. The recent introduction of an electronic points system has successfully engaged parents and their children in sharing achievements.

Staff are at an early stage in developing a shared understanding of what children can achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. They are growing in confidence about how they will design programmes and activities for all areas of the curriculum. Teachers in the primary classes, are developing improved approaches to outdoor learning and ensuring that areas of the curriculum are linked to make relevant learning experiences for children. In some classes children experience creative and motivating approaches to their learning. These effective practices should be shared to help bring about improvement across all classes. We have asked all staff to raise expectations and to

ensure they develop children's skills more systematically and progressively. Children at P7 are motivated through links with Lockerbie Academy and the partner schools. This helps children feel included and confident about their move to secondary education. The school should develop improved links between nursery and P1 classes, ensuring staff work together to bring about continuity in progress and learning at the early level of the curriculum.

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

The school is developing its approaches to evaluating the quality of its work. In the past year, the school's approaches to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching and to assessing and tracking children's progress have not been rigorous enough. The school should increase the pace of progress to improving its work and the aspects identified in the improvement plan. The school now needs to take a focused approach to improving its self-evaluation and improve the consistency in children's learning experiences and children's progress. Teachers are now encouraged to reflect more on their practices and the professional standards expected of them. They should continue to develop their professional knowledge and ensure this impacts positively for all classes. The school would benefit greatly from further development of leadership at all levels. At the time of this inspection the new headteacher had taken up her post only the week before our visit. Her appointment helps increase the school's capacity to improve. Teachers have told us they would like to be more involved in evaluating and improving the work of the school and parents would like to see more account taken of their views. The new headteacher is well placed to involve all stakeholders in the revision of the school's vision, values and aims and its rationale for the curriculum. With the leadership of the headteacher, continuing support from the Parent Council and greater involvement of yourselves as parents, the capacity of Hoddum Primary School and Nursery Class to improve, can be enhanced.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the nursery had no requirements and 4 recommendations. From these, all requirements have been met. As a result of this inspection, there is 1 requirement and 4 recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The motivated children who are keen to learn and welcome visitors to their school.
- The positive learning environment created by staff and their readiness to develop the school and nursery.

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

- Improve the curriculum and the consistency in high quality learning and teaching.
- Improve approaches to self-evaluation to ensure improved outcomes for all children.

### **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

Dumfries and Galloway Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within twelve months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Susan Gow  
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/HoddomSchoolDumfriesandGalloway.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter 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 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: [complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk) or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.