

14 February 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Dirleton Primary School  
East Lothian Council**

In January 2016, 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 Lothian 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.

**How well the school has improved the curriculum.**

The head teacher and staff have developed a clear understanding of what they want children to achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. They have identified and shared their values and make very good use of the school's locality as a unique feature for relevant contexts and wide variety of learning outdoors. This has helped children to develop a sense of pride in their school and their achievements. Parents of the Dirleton School Partnership continue to actively support the school. Parents value the termly class newsletters that outline ways in which they can engage with the school and their children's learning. The on-going development of curriculum planning, partnerships with parents and how children build on their skills over time is leading to better progress overall. This has been most noticeable in numeracy and literacy. A strong feature is the use staff make of interesting and real contexts for children to develop life skills in numeracy and maths. We have asked them to continue to develop the curriculum pathways for all areas of learning, as planned. The school has improved consistency in curriculum planning to support children to learn as best they can. Curriculum pathways help staff identify progress in learning and plan appropriately challenging experiences for most children. The sharing of information when children move from one stage to the next for the start of a new school year has improved. The school should further strengthen links with partnership nurseries to support development of the curriculum and shared understanding of standards at the early level.

## **How well self-evaluation approaches bring about measurable improvements for children and greater consistency in teaching across the school.**

The head teacher has successfully shared his vision and values for the school and his leadership of change is supported by staff and parents. He has developed strong teamwork amongst staff and a positive school ethos. Everyone we spoke to during our visit is very supportive of the school and proud of its achievements. Staff now take an increasing role in leading the school's improvement priorities. This has successfully improved the consistency in teaching approaches and what the school wants to achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. All staff are committed to their continuing professional development and share their strengths effectively with one another. They are becoming more reflective about their own practices through their openness in sharing good practice and learning from other professionals. In most lessons observed during the visit, teachers are providing effective support and challenge for most children. The pace of learning has improved and challenge for the highest attaining children is achieved through well-judged group activities. Children requiring support are making better progress through individual and group learning. They are supported well by staff who work alongside teachers in classes. Staff are encouraging children to think about their learning and with raised expectations ensure they are making improved progress. Children are increasingly taking responsibilities for their learning and have a strong say in how to improve the school. Their contribution to and leadership of a variety of citizenship groups is developing well. The health and wellbeing committee has developed a partnership with the school catering service leading to improved meal choices. They have raised children's awareness of the importance of healthy eating. Staff encourage children to talk about their learning and what they want to achieve. We have asked the school to continue to develop children's personal learning targets linked to their individual learning journeys and achievements. The head teacher encourages professional dialogue with staff and is developing an increased emphasis on self-evaluation leading to self-improvement. The staff have gained some experience in evaluating their work against national benchmarks. We have asked that they continue to evidence improvements and systematically evaluate progress to ensure they demonstrate an increasing impact on raising attainment.

## **How effectively is assessment and tracking children's progress leading to improved attainment and achievement?**

Overall, staff are now tracking the progress of most children well and developing a shared understanding of what to expect children to achieve. We are pleased with the stronger progress most children are making across the broad curriculum. The increased understanding of expected standards and consistency in planning for learning has led to improved progress in numeracy and literacy. The improved focus on tracking attainment and achievement and approaches to identify children with additional support needs helps inform learning groups and the next steps in learning. Staff make use of a range of assessment information to support their overall knowledge of how well children are progressing through Curriculum for Excellence levels. The emphasis in developing children's skills in writing and its assessment has led to children having increased awareness of how to improve further. Progress in numeracy and mathematics is improving and children are encouraged to think about how they apply their skills in a variety of real contexts through using digital

technologies and learning outdoors. Staff are growing in confidence and developing knowledge and understanding in making accurate professional judgements about children's progress and achievements. They should continue to develop this aspect of the school's work as outlined in the school's improvement plan and continue to raise expectations of what children can achieve.

### **What happens next?**

Overall, the inspection team is satisfied with the pace of change and the positive impacts evidenced through the professionalism of teachers, the improved curriculum and positive learning experiences for children. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve but more time is needed to evidence this more fully. East Lothian Council will continue to support the school and report progress to the Area Lead Officer in Education Scotland within twelve months of this inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland on whether we will make a return visit. East Lothian Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Susan Gow  
HM Inspector

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