

21 November 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**California Primary School  
Falkirk Council**

In October 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 Falkirk 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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.

**Areas of improvement**

**Improve the curriculum and increase the pace of implementation of national guidance.**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has worked very hard with parents, children and staff to create core values and a clear rationale for the curriculum. As a result, there is now a clearer understanding about the purpose of the curriculum in California Primary School. Creating a poster version of this rationale has made it meaningful for children and ensured that it is visible across the school. Within the nursery class, staff have made improvements to the design of the curriculum and there is now a stronger emphasis on play and active learning. Children respond positively to the opportunities they now have which promotes their curiosity and creativity, particularly in the outdoor environment. Nursery staff now need to develop further the curriculum ensuring that there is clear progression in learning across early level. They should continue to develop literacy and numeracy across learning in meaningful ways which are appropriate to young children. Across the primary stages, children are developing their understanding of the skills embedded within the curriculum through the '5R' approach. They are now more involved in planning their own learning and as a result, are better able to talk about their learning. The school have now adopted the Falkirk Council progression pathways for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These are helping teachers to better plan learning and next steps for individual learners. The school has benefitted from very effective support from Falkirk Council on the development of the curriculum. As a result, learning contexts are now more relevant and enable children to develop skills and

knowledge as they progress in their learning. The school should now continue to build on this positive start to develop further the curriculum to ensure there are clear progression pathways for all curricular areas. They should continue to monitor the impact of their recent curriculum developments to ensure these enable all children to make the best possible progress in their learning. Digital technologies are now more effectively used to support learning and the 'digital leaders' are providing good support for younger learners and their teachers.

### **Develop approaches to assessing and tracking children's progress to raise attainment and achievement.**

There is now a stronger focus across the school on monitoring and tracking children's progress. Within the nursery class, staff now make better use of observations and interactions to make more accurate judgements of children's learning. These observations are now documented in children's 'success story' folders. This work is at an early stage of development and we have asked staff to monitor the impact of this work and ensure that children and parents can use these new approaches to reflect on successes and next steps. As a result of having a clearer literacy and numeracy curriculum, staff across the primary stages now have a better understanding of progression in learning across curriculum for excellence levels. As a result, they are better able to monitor the progress of individual learners. Children are more involved in assessing their own progress through improved approaches to self and peer assessment and more helpful feedback from teachers. As a result, children are gaining skills in planning their own next steps. There remains scope for teachers to develop further the range of approaches to assessing learning in the classroom. The school are piloting a tracking tool to enable them to regularly monitor children's progress. We have asked the school to ensure that discussions between senior leaders and teachers focus on using this tracking tool to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners. The school should continue to create opportunities for staff to work with colleagues across other schools to develop further a shared understanding of standards and expectations.

### **Strengthen approaches to self-evaluation to ensure they result in improvements in children's learning.**

Staff across the school have worked together as a team and with parents to improve their approaches to self-evaluation. Parents are positive about the effective communication provided by the school and the open dialogue which exists between the Parent Council and the headteacher. Within the nursery class, staff have introduced new approaches, such as the floor book, to record their improvement journey and document the views of children, parents and staff. There are now more opportunities for parents to be engaged in their child's learning, for example, through 'stay and play' sessions. More strategic leadership of the nursery is still required to ensure that self-evaluation approaches become an integral feature of the work of the nursery. Across the primary stages, children are more involved in improving the work of the school and taking greater responsibility for their own learning. Examples include weekly reflection time, improved self and peer assessment, involvement in developing the 'House System' and the Pupil Council action plan. The whole school's use of a digital system is impacting positively on behaviour, motivation and engagement in learning. Parents are very positive about the impact of this tool in

learning more about their child's learning and to engage in regular communication with the teachers. Whilst there are now improved processes in place to support self-evaluation, the school recognises that there is a need to monitor more clearly the impact of their work on raising attainment and achievement for all learners.

### **What happens next?**

The school has made positive progress since the original inspection. To allow the school more time to demonstrate the impact of new developments on raising attainment for all learners, we will ask for a report on progress from Falkirk Council within twelve months of this inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Falkirk Council, that we intend to take.

Louise Turnbull  
Managing Inspector

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 0131 244 4330, 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.