

5 November 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Bonaly Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement, which we agreed with the school and The City of Edinburgh Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the nursery class again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher, staff and representatives from The City of Edinburgh Council. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the nursery class 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 nursery class has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

Continue to improve approaches to the school's self-evaluation and ensure the nursery is well supported in taking forward its areas for improvement.

The nursery class has made good progress in improving self-evaluation. The positive impact of senior leaders in leading identified improvements is a key feature of the improvement progress made since the original inspection. The commitment of the whole nursery team is evident and puts the nursery class in a positive place to further increase the pace of change through the more structured self-evaluation process. Practitioners have made a positive start to using the quality indicators from the self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' This is supporting practitioners to recognise what is working well and what still needs to be improved.

There is clear evidence of a shared responsibility for improvement within the nursery team that is led skilfully by the Principal Teacher. The nursery class improvement plan, a post inspection action plan and the monitoring and tracking calendar identify clearly key areas of focus as outlined in the original inspection.

Professional learning and support from The City of Edinburgh Council has ensured senior leaders and practitioners have developed their knowledge and skills in early learning and childcare. A deeper understanding of professional learning requirements is beginning to support the setting on its continuing improvement journey. Attendance at locality cluster meetings and opportunities to visit other settings is supporting a more outward looking approach. This is resulting in improvements in children's learning in the nursery class.

As planned, the increased involvement of parents and carers in the improvement journey of the nursery will be a positive next step. The development of 'Stay and Play' sessions and parent groups for specific improvement priorities will support this area for improvement.

There is now scope to develop further the specific leadership roles of practitioners linked to identified improvement priorities for the nursery class. This would support the developing curriculum knowledge of practitioners and develop further the quality of children's experiences.

Take forward the school's plans to improve the curriculum, streamline planning and assessment and ensure appropriate challenge for all children is achieved through consistently high quality learning and teaching across the school.

Children are happy, motivated and engaging in a wider variety of independent learning experiences since the original inspection. There are positive, caring relationships between practitioners and the children resulting in the children feeling valued, safe and secure.

Nursery environment reviews and completion of action plans are supporting a more child centred learning approach. Children can now access a wider range of resources more independently and lead their own learning. The support of practitioners and the improved layout and organisation of the nursery has improved opportunities for problem solving and creativity. The establishment of a monitoring calendar by senior leaders is currently identifying where questioning and interactions are most effective. This information is supporting the improvements in the quality of early and childcare in the nursery class.

The recent introduction of a Forest Schools Kindergarten pilot project by The City of Edinburgh Council is supporting practitioners to develop further their knowledge and understanding of the benefits of outdoor learning. Children are observed to be motivated and engaged in their outdoor learning at the Forest Schools Kindergarten and outside space at the nursery class. This is supporting children's physical activity, curiosity and inquiry skills and levels of engagement.

Planning and assessment processes have been streamlined and are beginning to better inform observations and identify next steps in children's learning. As a result, the quality of play and learning experiences has improved since the original inspection. The use of updated responsive planning formats that respond to children's interests are supporting practitioners to build upon children's prior learning. Continued development in this area will enable practitioners to more consistently link the children's interests with the wider curriculum and increase further depth and challenge in learning.

Practitioners' skills in capturing significant learning and achievements are improving following professional learning on observation and assessment. Parents have increasingly responded to online learning journal entries. Online learning journals now need to be discussed with children and families more regularly to ensure children have learning conversations that support them to know themselves better as learners. The learning journals should continue to be monitored rigorously to ensure they consistently track individual children's learning and progress across the curriculum. This will support practitioners to demonstrate better children's progress over time.

The curriculum rationale, although recently reviewed needs to better reflect the context of the setting and the needs of the community. The use of national guidance documents will support this process.

What happens next?

The nursery class has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the nursery class has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The City of Edinburgh Council will inform parents about the progress of the nursery class as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Louise Phillips
HM Inspector