

28 March 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Kilcreggan Primary School and Pre 5 Unit  
Argyll and Bute Council**

In February 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 Argyll and Bute 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/young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

**Raise attainment in literacy and numeracy across the Pre-5 unit and school.**

Since the original inspection the headteacher has had to manage significant staffing challenges. Long term staff absences and difficulties in consistent temporary cover for these absences have increased the headteacher's teaching commitment. Despite the staffing challenges the school has begun to make progress with the areas for development.

The headteacher and her staff have taken a number of important steps to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Assessment and tracking arrangements have been reviewed and teachers are gathering information on children's progress. Teachers are beginning to use national benchmarks to help them gain a clearer picture of how many children are achieving a level. We ask that the information staff collect is now synthesised into a format that they can interrogate and use to provide an accurate evaluation of children's progress in literacy and numeracy. The accelerated reading programme has had a very positive impact on children's confidence and progress in reading. The majority of children across the school now learn and attain skills in mathematics in more meaningful real life contexts. Children report that they like this way of learning and that their teachers place less emphasis on the completion of textbook examples.

The nursery class environment has been improved with the acquisition of new resources. The playrooms now offer more opportunities for children to explore early literacy and number. Children use mathematical language well in role play, they can identify items that were longer and shorter, heavier and lighter when questioned by

staff. Children now have access to a wider range of art and craft materials and media for mark making. They experimented confidently with colour at the painting easel and used a selection of paper and scissors at the writing table. Staff need to ensure that they build on this positive approach and allow children more time to play freely.

### **Improve learning experiences to provide children with more challenge in their learning.**

Children in the primary classes are beginning to have more opportunities to learn independently and take greater responsibility for their own learning. We observed teachers consistently sharing the learning intentions and success criteria across most stages. In many instances children are involved in identifying success criteria. In moving forward, teachers need to ensure all children are listening to the teacher and each other so that valuable learning and teaching opportunities are not lost. Active learning has improved across the school. Whilst children are becoming more actively engaged in their learning teachers should continue to ensure tasks are planned to meet the needs of all learners. In a few lessons, there was evidence of children being set tasks that they did not fully understand and subsequently they were unable to maintain concentration during the task. We found that teachers and support staff now work regularly together to develop high expectations of what children can achieve. Teachers are beginning to improve the effectiveness of feedback to help children know how to build on prior learning. The education authority needs to continue to support the school to address current staffing difficulties in providing additional support for learning to those children facing potential barriers to their learning. Additionally the school needs to review how well higher-achieving children are being challenged in their learning.

Children in the nursery continue to settle quickly to the set routines of the session. Most children play well together and they readily support new children settling into the nursery. Children benefit from regular opportunities to play in the outdoor area. Children choose from a wider range of resources during free play. We advise that staff review the use of group time particularly for the youngest children who still find it hard to concentrate for long periods of time. We observed children's learning was more effective when following their own interests supported by well-judged adult intervention. Children continue to express their thoughts and opinions well. Some of these ideas are recorded by both children and staff in floorbooks. Staff need to focus more on listening to children while they play and reflect on what children say to plan more challenging learning.

### **Develop the curriculum to ensure that children build on their knowledge and skills as they progress through the school.**

Overall, the pace of curricular development across the school and nursery class has improved but more needs to be done to ensure children build on their knowledge and skills as they progress through the school and nursery class. We have suggested that curriculum planners could be further streamlined to ensure they take full account of tackling bureaucracy. Staff have helpfully started to create a curriculum overview which takes account of composite classes and will prevent unnecessary repetition or gaps in children's learning. We agree with the headteacher that the time is now right

for staff to develop a relevant rationale for the curriculum and that this should be aligned to the school's vision, values and aims and capture what is unique about Kilcreggan School and its community.

### **Review systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving the work of the school.**

The headteacher is to be praised for her determination to address the main points for action that were agreed following the original inspection. However, the pace of improvement has been affected to some extent by the significant demands made on the headteacher to cover staff absences. It is important to acknowledge her hard work and that of staff in making positive progress. The school is now moving in the right direction but more time is needed to evidence the full impact of improvements.

The headteacher and her staff have taken a more proactive approach to improving the work of the school. They have revisited national guidance such as How Good Is Our School 4? They now intend to use the guidance more strategically to bring about further improvement. Children told us they value being consulted on matters which affect them. Their confidence and self-esteem is growing as a result of the increased focus on pupil voice. The headteacher has been monitoring lessons, children's work and teachers' plans. As yet there is still room to reduce the volume of documentation contained in teachers' planning folders to ensure time is focussed on delivering high quality teaching. Feedback to teachers is more focussed on improving teaching approaches and it will be important to build on this way of working as the school continues to improve the quality of learning and teaching, the curriculum and attainment. Overall, there is still insufficient rigour in the approaches to self-evaluation. We ask for continued support from the authority to ensure that the school makes the necessary improvements.

### **What happens next?**

The school has made some positive progress since the original inspection. Further work needs done to ensure that improvements are sustained over time. We will liaise with Argyll and Bute Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return within a year to carry out a further visit to the school. We will discuss with Argyll and Bute Council the details of this visit. When we return for our visit we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Marion Burns  
HM Inspector

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