

12 January 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Dirleton Primary School
East Lothian 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 opportunities for children to learn outdoors and links teachers are making between a variety of curriculum areas. 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?

Across all stages, children have positive learning experiences. Children in P1/2 work well in small groups which helps develop their confidence and supports them in their learning. P3/4 children are motivated to learn and enjoy learning through physical education experiences outdoors. P4/5 children are enthusiastic about their learning experiences in the local environment such as at Yellowcraigs beach. At P6/7, children engage well in interesting lessons supported effectively through the use of well-chosen group novels. Almost all children say the school is helping them to become more confident and most told us they enjoy learning. At all stages, children are encouraged by sharing their achievements with parents and are growing in confidence when talking about their learning. Almost all children feel they are encouraged to do their best and take responsibility for their learning. They are beginning to have more say in what they are learning and are becoming aware of when they are successful and how to improve further. We have asked staff to continue to develop learning in groups and to ensure the tasks and activities are always well matched and challenging enough to engage all children well. Teachers' relationships with children are positive and supportive. Most children are benefitting from activities arising from the recently introduced citizenship groups. We have asked the school to consider how the purpose and aims of these activities could be more clearly defined to ensure all children benefit as much as possible.

Children across the school are achieving in a range of activities including street dance, hockey and badminton. They take pride in their achievements and these are recognised and celebrated through displays, newsletters and assemblies shared with parents and local community partners. Children are actively involved in their local

community and are developing skills and confidence in raising awareness of beach litter within the local area. Dirleton Castle is accessed by many pupils where they develop their knowledge of the local heritage. P6/7 children are gaining a strong knowledge of local history through their experiences as tour guides at the castle. At all stages, children are making satisfactory progress in developing literacy skills. Almost all children listen attentively and talk confidently about their interests. Children's writing is of a satisfactory standard. They are developing writing skills in literacy lessons and now need to apply their learning in other areas of the curriculum. The school should ensure children at all stages write for a wide variety of purposes and to a consistently high standard. Children are motivated to read and are developing reading skills through a wide variety of books. The school should continue to develop children's enjoyment of reading and raise attainment further. Across the school, children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy. By P7, most children are secure in their knowledge and understanding of decimals and fractions but are less confident in their knowledge about shapes. We have asked the school to ensure children develop skills through building on their learning in a consistent way and to focus on improving children's mental mathematics as planned. At all stages, children are developing their understanding of health and wellbeing and the importance of physical activity. Almost all children report the school helps them to be active through taking part in out-of-school activities.

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

Across the school, teachers provide a supportive and positive ethos that encourages children to be successful in their learning. Children who have additional support needs are included well in classes for most of their day and have positive relationships with their teachers. Support staff work effectively in all classes across the school. The school should continue to review the ways in which support staff work with some groups and individual children, to ensure children are fully integrated in their classes and maximise opportunities for learning and making progress. The school has recently introduced learning journey folders for all children and now needs to develop these further to ensure children's learning targets are clearly understood by the children themselves, parents and staff. This will also help improve learning for those pupils capable of greater challenge. The school works closely with other professionals and partners such as the Educational Psychologist and outreach services to ensure the individual needs of children are supported and appropriate interventions are provided. The headteacher successfully encourages and involves parents actively in the life and work of the school. This is welcomed by the supportive Dirleton School Partnership and has encouraged high involvement in the orchard and beach garden developments.

Staff are growing in confidence about how they want to design programmes and courses for all areas of the curriculum and are at an early stage in developing their shared understanding of what they want to achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. They are developing improved approaches to outdoor learning and ensuring that areas of the curriculum are linked to make relevant learning experiences for children. In all classes, children experience all aspects of the curriculum. Staff recognise they should now focus on how to ensure children build on their prior learning. We have asked staff to ensure they develop children's skills more systematically and progressively. Children at P7 are motivated through links with North Berwick High School and the

residential experience planned with other local primary school children. This helps children to feel included and confident about their move to secondary education. The school should continue to further develop opportunities to make links with early learning classes and for staff to work together, ensuring continued progress at the early level of the curriculum.

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

The headteacher has been in post for just over a year and a half. In this time, he has had a positive impact on the work of the school. Staff welcome his leadership and the support he has provided to them. He models good practice and has increased expectations of what the school can achieve. He has encouraged staff to be reflective about how the school can improve and ways in which they can develop their skills. The focus on outdoor learning is an initiative that staff are implementing well. The headteacher and staff have successfully developed a positive ethos for the school in partnership with parents and the wider community. We have asked that they continue to involve parents and partners in the on-going development of the school's approaches to Curriculum for Excellence and to include them in evaluating the impact of new developments. Systematic ways have very recently been introduced to measure the school's effectiveness. The school recognises it now needs to gather robust evidence to ensure that children's experiences and achievements are improving continuously. Parents and partners who are in regular contact with the school are positive about the way the school is developing. Almost all parents are happy with the school and all believe their children enjoy learning. However, an important concern expressed by parents is for stability in the school staffing. East Lothian Council continues to monitor this.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The polite and articulate children who are motivated to learn.
- The teamwork of staff, their support of one another and readiness to take forward new initiatives and improve the work of the school.
- The positive start made by the headteacher to improving learners' experiences and gaining the confidence of parents and staff.
- The supportive parents and their active involvement in their children's learning and life of the school community.

We discussed with staff and East Lothian Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve the curriculum.
- Increase the effectiveness of evidence gathering to ensure self-evaluation approaches bring about measurable improvements for children and greater consistency in teaching across the school.
- Continue to improve approaches to assessment and tracking children's progress to ensure that children's attainment is improving and all children achieve to the best of their ability.

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 continue making improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian 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, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/DirletonPrimarySchoolEastLothian.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 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.