

21 December 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Drongan Primary School and Early Childhood Centre, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a virtual visit to the school. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

Supporting children, young people, and families through COVID-19

Staff maintained regular contact with children and their families during lock down. They delivered learning materials and essential items to individual homes. The headteacher and depute headteacher, with support from the local authority, provided children with digital devices where needed, to access online learning. The school building remained open providing childcare and in-school learning for children whose parents are key workers.

The headteacher used lock down well to continue with staff training opportunities. Staff took positive steps to support children's wellbeing and learning as far as possible during lockdown through online learning and home visits. On return to school, staff identified gaps in children's learning and established boost groups to help improve attainment. The leadership team and staff monitor the improvements in children's learning closely. Staff have taken significant steps to support children's wellbeing through their nurture training and by providing counselling for children who have suffered loss.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Since the last inspection, the new leadership team continue to provide clear direction to the work of the school. Staff are developing a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching, and continue to work on improving their digital skills. As a result, the quality of learning and teaching across the school is now of a higher standard. Children are now developing skills to help them take responsibility for improving their learning. They are more involved in setting and reviewing their own learning targets.

The leadership team and staff have improved how they meet children's needs. They now monitor more carefully the progress of children with additional support needs. Parents, support staff and teachers now participate in setting short term targets for these children to help them make progress in their learning. Support staff are used well across the school to provide much needed assistance to children. The pace and challenge of learning in classes is improving. The school has been successful in achieving the Dyslexia Friendly Schools

Inclusive Practice gold award. The increased awareness of all staff and children about the needs of children with dyslexia and other additional support needs is beginning to help improve children's attainment.

The leadership team have taken positive steps to include staff more in decisions about school improvements. Teachers and support staff feel more involved in leading important school developments and take responsibility willingly to support improvement. The headteacher and staff have now taken steps to improve the curriculum. Staff can now plan experiences, which build on children's previous learning as they move through the school. They provide experiences that interest children and are relevant to their own lives. Recently, staff have had a focus on improving children's understanding of religious and moral education. Staff provided learning activities on diversity and anti-sectarianism in response to recent relevant events in the media. The school has received a Rights Respecting Schools silver award, which has led to improved relationships across the school.

There have been changes to the leadership team within the early childhood centre, which is helping provide clear direction to the improvements undertaken. The leadership team work well alongside practitioners to help improve interactions with children through play. Practitioners have created a more stimulating learning environment and have improved how they meet the needs of children. They have made good links with staff in Primary 1 to help support children's learning as they move into school.

What happens next?

Understandably, staff in the school have been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. They have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. East Ayrshire Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector