

5 September 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bowmore Primary School and Nursery Class
Argyll and Bute Council**

In January 2015, 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. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in March 2016. 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. 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.

Improve attainment in English, Gaelic and mathematics.

Under the strong leadership of the new acting headteacher the school has taken very positive steps to improve attainment in English, Gaelic and mathematics. Across the school, staff now have a clearer understanding of where children are in their learning and the support and challenge they now require. New approaches to gathering and analysing children's progress in English, Gaelic and mathematics are supporting this well. Regular discussions between staff and the acting headteacher ensure that raising attainment for all learners is given an appropriate focus. New approaches to teaching aspects of English and mathematics are helping to ensure children make better progress in their learning. Good examples of this include the more active approaches to teaching spelling and mental mathematics. The school has increased the learning through Gaelic for children in Gaelic Medium Education. The recent trip for children to the Isle of Skye has helped re-establish a sense of purpose to immersion. The acting headteacher needs to continue with her plans to strengthen further approaches to immersion. Support staff are deployed well in classes to ensure children make the best possible progress. Children in the nursery and primary classes are clearly more interested and engaged in their learning. They enjoy greater responsibility in leading their own learning. Staff enable them to reflect on their strengths and next steps, making good use of their peers and parents to support this. Positively, the learning journals have been developed to involve children more in planning and reviewing their own learning. Staff have developed learning environments across the school to engage and stimulate learners. The

outdoor area used by children in the nursery classes offers an exciting context for children to develop their curiosity and investigative skills.

Improve the strategic leadership of the curriculum to ensure all staff are supported in taking forward Curriculum for Excellence

Bowmore Primary School has improved the effectiveness of its curriculum. In so doing, the acting headteacher has guided staff very well by demonstrating very strong leadership of the curriculum. The school bases its curriculum on a clear rationale which is linked to the design principles and the school's values. The visual representation of the rationale helpfully assists staff, children, parents and the wider community to understand what the school is striving to achieve for its learners. Staff have a much clearer understanding of the rationale and resultant progression. This is supported by learning pathways which have been developed in some subjects, with plans for the future development of all areas of the curriculum. Learning through topics is resulting in deeper learning with more application in real-life contexts. There is greatly improved leadership of Gaelic Medium Education. The acting headteacher's understanding, enthusiasm and commitment to Gaelic Medium Education is key to this. Importantly, the acting headteacher and her staff know how to achieve continuous improvement for Gaelic Medium Education. Staffing and effective partnerships have been utilised very well to improve the quality of children's experiences. One example of this is the way that Islay Gaelic College is delivering lessons in literacy and Gàidhlig. The acting headteacher has built good relationships with Comann nam Pàrant. Together, they have been working with Islay High School so that there is better progression in children's learning as they move to secondary. Inspectors have asked that this remains a priority so that transitions for Gaelic Medium Education are improved. Across the school, staff are successfully adopting newer programmes such as *Developing the Young Workforce*. Children are becoming more aware of the how their skills for learning, life and work are being developed.

Improve the pace of learning and provide more challenging activities, better matched to children's needs

During this visit, we observed lessons which promote a higher level of challenge and a brisker pace in learning. New approaches to learning and teaching are supporting this well. Lessons and follow-up work are now differentiated more effectively. Learning intentions and success criteria are utilised well to support differentiation. Children are more actively involved in their learning and, as such, engagement and enjoyment is clearly evident across the classes. Staff are now ensuring they are effectively building on prior learning. Children can articulate what they are learning and make links to other areas of their learning. For example, in science children linked learning about a fair test with previous learning. The acting headteacher and principal teacher have undertaken a full review of children who require additional help with their learning. There is now a comprehensive overview in place which is being used well to ensure all children have the opportunity to make appropriate progress. Inspectors have asked that the school continues to ensure that higher-achieving children make the best possible progress.

Ensure the management of self-evaluation has a stronger focus on improving outcomes for children

The acting headteacher has provided this school with much needed direction and leadership. As a result, there is now a strong culture for improvement. There have been many positive developments since our last inspection. The acting headteacher is providing very strong leadership for improvement based on robust self-evaluation. She is making very effective use of Education Scotland's Advice on Gaelic Education. Across the school, staff are also playing a very important role in helping to identify school priorities and improve the school. With very good support from the acting headteacher and principal teacher, staff are taking forward priorities at a brisk pace and with great commitment. Staff are rightly proud of the improvements made so far. New approaches to gathering views of children and staff will support continuous improvement of the school. Staff are keen to take forward new developments. There were many examples of this, including new approaches to teaching spelling and mental mathematics and tracking children's progress. Commendably, this is now a more reflective school. Staff engage more with colleagues in other schools and undertake professional learning to help improve their practice. Children also enjoy a role in improving their school. They continue to make strong contributions as part of their involvement in the 'change makers' groups. Older children also benefit from the skills they gain as they take responsibility for leading lunchtime groups. Across the school, staff are more informed about national expectations due to their engagement with national frameworks. This, along with the skilled leadership of the acting headteacher, is helping to secure necessary improvements for this school.

What happens next?

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

Jackie Maley
HM Inspector

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