

25 April 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Hoddom Primary School and Nursery Class
Dumfries and Galloway Council**

In March 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 Dumfries and Galloway 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. 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. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

How well has the school improved approaches to self-evaluation to ensure improved outcomes for all children?

The headteacher has been in post for 12 months. In that time, her leadership of self-evaluation is having a significantly positive impact on improving the school and nursery. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made overall. The headteacher places high value on developing the professional knowledge and skills of the staff team across the school and nursery. Staff have fostered strong team working and developed a shared vision of what they want children to experience and achieve. All staff contribute well to the positive learning environment and care shown to children. Teachers and nursery staff are reflective and continually look for ways to share good practice with one another. They willingly take shared leadership responsibilities that are leading to improved outcomes for children. We have asked the school to continue to share what is working well and to build on this further by taking opportunities to work with the partnership schools and beyond. The professional learning and focus on how teachers provide consistently high quality learning opportunities is beginning to lead to children making better progress. Children in the nursery are benefiting from experiences that match their interests and allows them increased variety including learning outdoors. Across the primary stages, attainment in literacy and numeracy shows improvement by P7. The oldest children listen well and talk about their reading and writing in a reflective way using sophisticated vocabulary and level of understanding. Children in the younger classes listen attentively and respond to their teachers very well. The focus on mental agility in numeracy is beginning to help children make confident and accurate

written calculations. We have asked the school to continue to improve the pace of learning across the early level from nursery to P2 to ensure all children achieve as well as they can. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children have a good awareness of healthy food choices. They are well cared for and feel safe in school. Relationships are very positive and reflect the value placed on mutual respect and trust. Children are very proud of their school and the range of skills they are developing through their involvement in committees and Master classes. Their achievements are shared and celebrated throughout the school and nursery wall displays. Nursery staff should create opportunities for nursery children to be included in pupil groups across the school. We have asked the headteacher and staff to take forward rigorous tracking and monitoring of children's achievements and attainment to ensure all children make the best progress possible.

How well has the school improved the curriculum and the consistency in high quality learning and teaching?

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, staff have a clear understanding of what they want children to achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. They plan experiences and outcomes across the curriculum and provide real life opportunities for children to apply the skills and knowledge they are gaining. Children are building on their learning and skills development in a consistent way overall. There is scope for the curriculum from the nursery to P1 to be planned more coherently to ensure that the ways children learn best are developed more consistently. Greater flexibility in the nursery class should lead to children preparing snack at a time of their choice. Moving forward, the staff in the nursery and at the primary stages should now make greater use of the local environment and community in developing outdoor learning. Across the range of learning observed during the inspection visit, almost all children are engaged well in their learning. They are supported well by staff who provide interesting and imaginative learning experiences. Almost all children use their cooperative skills effectively when working in pairs and small groups. This should be a more regular feature for the youngest classes where children should be encouraged more to investigate and play in small groups and have fewer worksheet activities to complete individually. Overall, there is good consistency in high quality learning and teaching. Teachers are skilled in using effective approaches to inform how well children are learning and achieving. They support and challenge children through tasks and activities planned to meet their learning needs. Some lessons are enhanced through effective use of digital technologies. We have asked the staff to continue to build on this further and to use digital technologies to support children in their learning. Children have a good awareness of themselves as learners and talk confidently about the skills they are developing and their importance for future life and work. Most can evaluate their own work, know when they have been successful and what they need to do to improve. Children are involved in identifying their individual targets. The school should continue to develop learning targets ensuring they are as meaningful as possible and ensure prior learning is built upon for all children.

What happens next?

Overall, 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. Dumfries and Galloway Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

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