

23 April 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Kilmartin Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Argyll and Bute Council. During our recent visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting 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.

Review approaches to promoting and supporting positive relationships and behaviour across the school and ELC. This will improve children's learning experiences and the ethos across the school.

The acting headteacher and staff have improved relationships and behaviour across the school and ELC. They have created high and shared expectations of behaviour. They reviewed the school values, involving children and families, in November 2023. These values can be seen in the everyday life and work of the school. There is now a more positive ethos and nurturing climate for learning across the school and ELC.

All staff promote children's health and wellbeing and understand how important it is to support children to develop positive relationships. Children's rights are discussed, understood and are part of children's experiences. The school received a national accreditation for this work. Children know their voices are heard and they feel confident and respected by adults in the school. This supports much improved positive relationships and behaviour across the whole school community.

The acting headteacher supports staff effectively to develop and implement a relationships policy involving all key stakeholders. This supports a consistent and shared approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour across the school. In addition, it provides a shared understanding for parents/carers on approaches being implemented. A few children across the school have lead roles in supporting the wellbeing of others as Wellbeing Ambassadors. They are trained to support their peers in the playground and a playground charter gives clear expectations of what is expected during break times. This is effectively improving children's experiences in the playground. Children feel safe and know there is an adult they can ask if they are worried about something, or they need support.

All parents feel that communication has improved significantly. There are regular newsletters and online platforms that share children's learning and curriculum coverage. This enables families to support children's learning experiences and creates a positive learning environment. The Parent Council are involved in improvements to the school and contribute ideas to the school improvement plan. Parents attend events in the school including 'show-of-learning' events and 'stay and play' sessions in the ELC. Parents are positive about the

school's participation in local community events and activities. This contributes to the ethos of being part of a wider school community.

Teachers should improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment to ensure all children make the best possible progress.

The acting headteacher has provided clear leadership and guidance to teachers which is helping them to improve the quality of learning and teaching. As a result, children are making better progress in their learning. Teachers have undertaken professional learning to improve the quality of learning and teaching.

Teachers now provide children with opportunities to learn in different ways and at a faster pace. They provide clear explanations and instructions which helps almost all children be engaged and motivated in their learning. Teachers use a variety of approaches which help children to be independent learners. This enables teachers to provide direct teaching to specific groups and individuals, ensuring that children receive learning that is more suited to their needs. Teachers use digital technology well to support and enhance children's learning. The school is well-equipped with digital technology. Teachers should continue to ensure that all children access digital technology to extend their learning on a regular basis.

Teachers now use a consistent whole-school approach to sharing the purpose of learning with children during lessons. They also share steps to success with children which link clearly to the purpose of learning. As a result, children are clear about what they are learning and why. Teachers plan children's learning using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. They plan learning that is set at different levels of difficulty to suit children's needs well. Teachers share approaches to planning and assessing children's learning with colleagues in local schools. This helps teachers to have an increasing understanding of national standards and make well-considered judgements about children's progress. The acting headteacher has identified that a next step is to ensure children continue to receive learning that is relevant to the school and community context.

The acting headteacher uses Pupil Equity Funding to develop assessment approaches. This helps them identify gaps in children's learning and set targets. These improved approaches to assessing children's progress help teachers to identify gaps in children's learning, set targets and plan appropriate interventions. Across the school, children receive small group or one-to-one support in literacy and numeracy. As a result, children who receive additional support with their learning are making better progress. Overall, most children are now making better progress and achieving appropriate levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Children to have more ownership of their learning and develop a wider range of skills for learning, life and work.

Teachers now provide children with more opportunities to have ownership of and lead their learning. Across the school and ELC, all children have useful opportunities to make choices about their learning. Teachers should continue to provide children with choice on what and how they learn and how to share their learning. Teachers now provide children with useful written feedback in their jotters. This explains clearly to children what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. These approaches help children to be clearer about what they need to do to be successful in their learning and to make better progress.

Teachers support children to set targets in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This is helping children to consider more carefully their next steps in learning and make progress. Children reflect weekly on their learning in their learning journey books. These approaches support children well to have greater ownership of their learning.

Children now have more opportunities to lead learning across the school. Older children select the right every week from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that they wish to be the key focus across the school. This is helping children to develop as global citizens, understand their rights and contribute effectively to the work of the school.

All children across the school and ELC are members of 'Kilmartin House of Parliament'. This supports all children to be involved in key decisions and activities that affect them. They are members of a 'Rights Ring-leader Party', 'Eco Trooper Party' or 'Wellbeing Ambassador Party'. This helps children to develop a range of skills including decision making, teamwork, cooperative and leadership skills. Children are confident to share their views through these groups. Children in P6 and P7 develop their leadership skills well as part of the 'Live Argyll Young Leaders Programme'. They plan sports sessions for younger children which helps develop their confidence and communication. They consider aspects of health and safety when leading games which is helping them to become responsible citizens.

Overall, the range of clubs and groups support children very well to develop their skills for learning and life. Working with partners in the local community is having a positive impact on children's skills and knowledge about the world of work. Staff now need to support children to recognise and talk about the skills they are developing through these experiences. They should work together with children to develop a shared language for skills.

Children should have increased opportunities to contribute to decision-making about issues that affect them and the wider life of the school.

All staff value and listen to children's ideas and suggestions. All children are now involved in decision-making through their involvement in pupil leadership groups and developing their leadership skills. They take part in regular meetings with staff who act upon their suggestions and create action plans to monitor progress. Children share progress with all ELC and school children during weekly 'Sharing of Knowledge' assemblies. All children have an opportunity to take on classroom leadership roles. Older children plan and lead lunchtime clubs including a sports club with the support of partners, 'Live Argyll'. Children in the ELC have leadership roles including snack and lunch helpers and are supported skilfully by practitioners to develop their independence skills. This supports children to be more confident, positive and feel they are included in decision-making.

Children appreciate the 'What's on your mind box?' which supports them to be involved in decisions and share suggestions about improvements to the school. They feel listened to and can talk about how the acting headteacher and staff respond to their suggestions. This supports children's inclusion in decisions that affect them, and they feel respected and confident.

Staff have discussions with children which include questions about issues that affect them. They ask children about their involvement in decisions about the school, relationships and how these impact on learning experiences. Staff change approaches and include children in

their suggested changes. Most children feel staff listen to their views and take them into account. As planned, senior leaders should continue to explore opportunities for children to be involved in school improvement planning.

Continue to develop approaches to learning through play across the early level and beyond.

The principal teacher works with staff across the early level to develop approaches and understanding of how children learn through play. Staff work well with local authority colleagues and engage with professional learning and national guidance to review and reflect on their practice. Teachers and practitioners have worked together to develop engaging environments for learning in the ELC and P1-P4 class. Children are involved in the ongoing review of the learning spaces. As a result, children have a sense of ownership of their learning spaces. Staff should continue to engage in professional learning to develop further play across the early level.

Teachers and ELC practitioners work in collaboration with local authority staff to develop further their knowledge. This includes the principles of nurture, relevant UNCRC articles and other identified areas for development through observations of learning. Planning in the ELC is responsive and has a blend of adult led, contexts for children to explore and child led learning. Children and practitioners discuss their learning through the effective use of floor books and children's individual 'Learning Journey' books. This reflective approach is used effectively in the multi-stage class and children are increasingly aware of how they can achieve success in their learning. As planned, staff in the multi-stage class should develop further access to free-flow play opportunities. Staff across the early level will benefit from planned visits to other settings to observe and share effective practice.

What happens next?

The school has made very positive 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.

Louise Phillips
HM Inspector