

6 November 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Dunoon Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Argyll and Bute 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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.

Develop leadership at all levels, including leadership opportunities for children, to increase the pace of change across the school. This will support strategic and well informed change that results in continuous improvement in children's experiences.

The appointment of the current headteacher has provided much needed stability and a focus on continuous improvement in Dunoon Primary School. Parents, pupils and staff all speak warmly about her commitment to the school and are positive about the considerable changes she has made, or is proposing. As a result, the pace of change in a number of important aspects of school practice and provision has increased considerably. When making changes, the headteacher also considers where things are working well and where further improvement is needed. For example, the headteacher and senior leaders have developed approaches for checking the progress of individual children across the school. They have identified that further analysis and follow-up work is now needed to make sure that planned activities are leading to improved outcomes for children. The school has also been well supported by Argyll and Bute Council.

Staff have regular meetings throughout the year. These provide opportunities for staff to discuss and plan together in order to improve children's experiences in school. Teachers are leading developments in school that are supporting children to improve, for example in numeracy. As a result of a greater range of leadership roles within the school, almost all children play a more active part within both the school and the local community. They have the opportunity to participate in groups such as the building site supervisors, young sports leaders and the Rights Respecting Schools group. The pupil and Parent Councils are both involved in fundraising for new playground equipment. Children speak enthusiastically about the variety of ways they can contribute to the school. They are confident that their views are welcomed, listened to and acted upon.

At this stage it is too early to evaluate fully the impact of the majority of the changes. However, we are confident that the actions taken to date are the right steps required to move the whole school forward.

Strengthen strategic guidance and support to teaching across the school to improve the consistency of learning and teaching. All learners should be engaged in

appropriately motivating and challenging learning in order to raise attainment and ensure the best possible outcomes for children in all curriculum areas.

The school is making good progress across this area for improvement. The headteacher has high expectations for the quality of learning and teaching across the school. Staff are committed to increasing their own skills and knowledge. Regular staff meetings provide increased opportunities for staff to talk together about learning and teaching. Teachers and classroom assistants recognise the value of this dialogue and as a result, are working well together to raise expectations of what children can achieve. There is now an improving approach to planning and assessment. This is resulting in a more engaging experience for children. Children report that they enjoy having more say in what they are learning. The headteacher is aware of the need to continue to improve the curriculum and make sure that children study topics which are relevant to them and which help them to learn.

To improve the use of information on children's progress. Staff should further develop approaches to assessment, tracking and monitoring and use these effectively to improve attainment for all children and plan learning which meets the needs of all learners. In doing so staff should work with each other and with other schools to ensure a shared understanding of national standards of attainment.

The school is making satisfactory progress in this area for improvement. The headteacher has guided staff well in improving approaches to checking whether children are making progress. Staff should now monitor groups of children, including those who are affected by socio-economic disadvantage, to make sure that all children have the opportunity to succeed. Staff work with each other and with colleagues from other schools to check that children work at the right level and make appropriate progress throughout their time at school. At this stage of the new school year, it is clear that the majority of children at the early stages have made a positive start in their learning, and the majority of children in the upper stages are making good progress. Led by the headteacher, staff are becoming more familiar with expected standards, using the National Benchmarks, across literacy and numeracy. They also have a developing understanding of children's progress across aspects of health and wellbeing. This, in conjunction with a more consistent approach to learning and teaching across the school, is beginning to have a positive impact on children's progress.

The school should build on existing good practice, focusing on promoting positive behaviour, inclusion and respect with children and staff; ensuring that all children are included in all aspects of school life.

The school has made steady progress in this area. Across all stages, children are well behaved and polite, in class and during social activities in the playground. There is now a calm and purposeful ethos across the school. Staff consult with children more frequently about the types of clubs they would like to have. There are more clubs representing a wider variety of interests.

Staff have worked hard to address the issue of inconsistency in the experiences for children across the school and develop whole school strategies. For example, approaches to support for learning have improved. Parents and children are more fully involved and clearer learning targets are set for children to achieve. There is now a more consistent approach to the

recording and tracking of targets for children, especially those with barriers to learning. However, as this is a fairly new development it has yet to impact on children's attainment.

Children are enthusiastic about their engagement with the Rights Respecting Schools programme. Dunoon Primary has earned its Bronze Award. The focus on children's rights and responsibilities has been reinforced by the increased use of the wellbeing indicators which are helping children to resolve difficulties. Children highlight an improvement in behaviour and a greater understanding of the needs of others. However in pre-inspection questionnaires a few children did not know if the school helped them to keep safe. Staff should therefore continue to focus on this area. The planned development of a relationships/anti-bullying/positive behaviour policy within the school community, with a focus on rights, wellbeing and nurture principles, will help to support this process.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within a year of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Argyll and Bute Council that we intend to take.

Jacqueline Gallagher
HM Inspector