

3 September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In August 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on St Andrew's Primary School and Early Childhood Centre. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and East Ayrshire 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.

Improve planning for continuous improvement and implementing change. This should include setting measurable and sustainable improvement priorities which focus on improving children's attainment and achievement. In taking this work forward, it will be important to increase opportunities for children and staff to lead on school improvement and influence change.

A flexible leadership approach involving the campus headteacher was used prior to and following the appointment of a permanent primary school and early childhood centre headteacher. Until the headteacher was appointed, the campus headteacher provided leadership and guidance for the primary school and early childhood centre (ECC). Since the primary school and ECC headteacher's appointment in August 2023, the campus headteacher supported by East Ayrshire Early Years Team retained responsibility for the early childhood centre. Meanwhile, the newly appointed headteacher and two deputy headteachers focused on improving outcomes for children at the primary stages. Collectively, staff with responsibility for the primary school and ECC provide clear leadership and direction for improvement.

Across the primary school and ECC, improved planning for continuous improvement and implementing change is now in place. Quality assurance approaches provide more reliable information about what is going well and what needs to be improved. Senior leaders observe the quality of learning, teaching and assessment through visiting classes and the ECC playrooms. Teachers and practitioners receive helpful feedback linked to their professional learning to improve their practice. The school improvement plan sets out areas for improvement for the academic year and shows how changes will be achieved. Moving forward, there is a need to revisit the improvement priorities over a longer period of time with clearer measures of success. The school improvement plan does not yet provide clarity on how improvements are measured.

Individual class teachers now engage in leading learning in their own classrooms. They participate in leadership groups and readily share their knowledge and understanding with each other. Children in P4 to P7 enjoy participating in the climate change, positive relationships, maths champions, playground pioneers, mini vinnies, play leaders, rights respecting schools and language ambassadors leadership groups. Children promote the school values of "Ready, Respectful, Safe" through their contributions on these groups and are positive about the changes that they will bring over time.

There has been appropriate progress in leading and managing the primary school and nursery class through a period of instability. There is some evidence of positive impact on developing leadership at all levels, children's attainment, attendance and achievement. This positive start needs to continue to improve children's outcomes over time. In addition, there needs to be a clear plan in place to support the transition arrangements of the ECC leadership from the campus headteacher to the headteacher of the primary school.

Children, parents and staff are not yet fully involved in or aware of the many positive changes that are taking place in the school. There is a need to continue to improve communication with parents and staff as they develop a greater sense of community. This improved communication includes teachers sharing children's learning and successes with increased participation of families in the life and work of the school.

Develop a cohesive and consistent approach to promoting children's wellbeing and inclusion in the school. This should include clear operational guidance on processes and record-keeping, to help staff meet the needs of all children.

Senior leaders have developed a whole-school approach to promoting wellbeing. As a result, most children in the primary classes and the nursery class understand and respect their own and other's wellbeing. Staff access helpful resources which they amend to meet children's needs. The school values of 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' are recognised clearly by almost all children in classes and by most children in the playground.

Teachers and support staff use an agreed programme to build children's understanding of their own and others' emotions which is based on the school values. Children demonstrate the school values well and staff celebrate their success at assemblies. This celebration of success is improving relationships and supporting children to be part of the whole school community. Most children know they have someone to talk to if they feel upset or worried.

Senior leaders have made significant progress to develop clearer processes and record-keeping for children requiring additional support in their learning. Policies now reflect national guidance accurately and staff have an increased understanding of ways to support children. In addition, teachers, practitioners and senior leaders now focus clearly on the progress that children make. Staff involve individual children who require additional support and their families in annual review meetings to plan and review children's learning. Staff should now ensure that they provide all children, including more able children, with the right level of support and challenge in their learning.

All staff should continue to develop their understanding and use of nurturing and restorative approaches which support children to build positive relationships. In taking this work forward, these approaches should be shared with all stakeholders.

Across the school there is evidence of improved relationships between children. This positive change was achieved through the work of the rights respecting working party, outside agencies and senior leaders. Children are more respectful of each other and can reflect on their actions to resolve conflict. A few children still require support to behave in a respectful way towards each other in classrooms and in the playground. Across the school, there is a need for staff to continue to support all children in their wellbeing.

Staff worked together to revisit the principles of providing a nurturing classroom. They have also developed a useful nurture group policy and reinstated the 'umbrella' room. This is helping staff and practitioners to understand children's different stages of social, emotional, physical and intellectual development and their behaviours. Staff now provide a calm space within each classroom where children can take some time to regulate their emotions.

The headteacher identified that there is still a need to develop and embed a shared understanding and definition of bullying and respectful behaviours. Most children believe that the school helps them to understand and respect other people. A minority of children do not feel the school deals well with bullying. Senior leaders are at the early stages of working with the Parent Council to develop a 'Respect for All' establishment statement. This includes working with the Parent Council to define what constitutes bullying and bullying behaviours. There is a need to continue to ensure that all children view the school's approaches to prevent and tackle bullying positively.

What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with East Ayrshire Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school and Early Childhood Centre within 18 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with East Ayrshire Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Dr. Elizabeth C Montgomery
HM Inspector