

14 December 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Eyemouth Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Hub, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority, and carried out a visit to Eyemouth Primary School and ELC Hub. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the new headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

### **Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19**

Since our last inspection visit to Eyemouth Primary School and ELC Hub, the school has had a number of staff changes. A new headteacher was appointed in May 2021. Over the last eighteen months, senior leaders and staff have created two COVID-19 recovery action plans, which outline priorities to support the school community during the pandemic. These help all staff and children to feel safe and confident in the school environment. Staff have worked collaboratively to develop effective communication approaches to support ongoing engagement with families. These approaches help to provide reassurance and ensure a shared understanding of COVID-19 guidance.

Additional staff members have been appointed to the school to help identify and address gaps in children's learning and progress resulting from the pandemic. This additional staffing includes a COVID-19 recovery teacher, nurture teacher and additional pupil support assistants. Alongside existing staff and practitioners, they provide helpful targeted support to groups of learners, with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. There are early signs that this is having a positive impact on children's attainment, achievement and wellbeing.

Across the ELC and primary school, senior leaders and staff updated the curriculum to ensure an enhanced focus on wellbeing. They developed an emotional literacy programme, which includes relevant strategies to support families to become more involved in their children's learning.

To support recovery and children's return to school after periods of remote learning, school staff prioritised the importance of transitions from home to school, within school, and for children at P7 moving to secondary school. As a result, parents and carers feel their children are supported well through these enhanced approaches to transition. Senior leaders and staff have developed positive relationships with partners from across the local community including, the local food store and community police. These relationships have enhanced significantly children's citizenship skills and the school's identity within the town of Eyemouth.

Senior leaders and staff report that they plan to continue to build on these partnerships to enrich further children's learning experiences.

During the second lockdown, a local authority initiative ensured all children across the primary school received a digital device and access to the internet to support their learning. Children, parents and staff speak very positively about the development of digital technologies, which continue to enhance children's learning and the quality of teaching across the school.

### **Progress with recommendations from previous inspection**

There has been good progress in developing clearer leadership to improve outcomes for all children across the ELC and primary school. The new headteacher is supported well by two deputy headteachers and two principal teachers. Collectively, they provide good strategic direction. Stakeholders comment positively on improvements in the ELC and primary school.

Across the ELC and primary school, senior leaders, with staff, practitioners, children and parents, have reviewed the vision and values. These focus appropriately on developing a supportive ethos and culture, and are having a positive impact on the learning environment across the school. Senior leaders and staff communicate effectively with parents and carers. They seek and consider fully the views of parents and carers to help shape improvements.

In the ELC, the deputy headteacher and practitioners now have regular meetings which have a sharper focus on improvement priorities and tracking children's progress. The ELC team work very well together and have brought about significant and positive change to the setting. This includes approaches to support children to lead their own learning, and improving the quality of the learning environment. Across the primary stages, staff work very well as a team. With the support of senior leaders, they show collective strength in taking forward areas for improvement identified in the original inspection report. Staff now have more focused leadership roles across the school to improve outcomes for learners, for example, the development of whole-school approaches to nurture.

Senior leaders and practitioners have taken very positive steps to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the ELC and at the primary stages. In the ELC, children are happy, settled and motivated in their learning. They respond well to the positive ethos in the setting. They are becoming more independent, making choices and decisions about their learning in extended, sustained and meaningful play. Staff meet regularly with the deputy headteacher to discuss children's progress. They identify any required strategies to support children in order that they achieve their potential.

At the primary stages, teachers now provide tasks and activities that better meet children's needs. There is a calm, more settled environment where children behave well and have a sense of pride in their school. Children feel more empowered to lead school improvements. They now have a variety of valuable opportunities to take on duties and responsibilities across the school, which develop their skills as effective contributors and active citizens.

Since the last inspection, significant work has taken place across the ELC and primary stages to improve the approaches to track and monitor children's progress in learning and their achievements. Children in the ELC are now making better progress in health and

wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Effective systems are now in place to enable practitioners to identify more robustly gaps in children's learning. Staff across the early level work well together to support a shared understanding of national expectations and progress in children's learning. At the primary stages, senior leaders work with staff to address gaps in children's attainment at whole school, class and individual levels. This helps to ensure all children receive the support they need to make appropriate progress in their learning.

Senior leaders and staff have introduced a number of programmes across the school to promote positive relationships and wellbeing. Support staff make a very positive contribution to the work of the school, and provide effective support to individuals and groups of children.

Significant work has taken place in the ELC and at the primary stages to develop a curriculum that is relevant, and supports children's progress in learning. Practitioners and staff have worked with children and families to create a clear vision and curriculum rationale. Part of this vision involves extending learning through play into P1 and beyond. Feedback received from practitioners and children has helped shape significant improvements to the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The ELC team has worked well together to take on leadership roles to develop a child-centred curriculum. This is having a significant and positive impact on the pace of change in the ELC. We have asked the ELC team to continue to develop the provision for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to improve further the quality of children's experiences and interactions.

At the primary stages, a curriculum rationale is now in place that reflects better the context of the school. All staff work very well together to continue to improve and develop the curriculum, which takes account of local and national guidance. As a result, staff have a developing understanding of children's progress across all areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders and staff continue to develop a shared understanding of how to help children make natural, relevant and meaningful links across their learning. This is supporting children to develop their confidence in applying skills and knowledge learned to new and unfamiliar contexts. All staff explore ways in which outdoor learning can enhance children's learning experiences across the curriculum. Children are responding well to these experiences. Staff should now continue to work together to develop a whole school programme to enable children to engage in outdoor learning experiences, which meet better their individual needs.

### What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Scottish Borders Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Dennise Sommerville  
HM Inspector