

20 August 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Skipness Primary School
Argyll and Bute Council**

Recently, as you may know, I inspected your child's school. During my visit, I talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. I wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with me the school's successes and priorities for improvement. I looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including how the school provides progression and challenge in children's learning, the impact of outdoor learning and how the school supports staff to take forward new developments. As a result, I was able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

The school provides a welcoming and caring environment. Children enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic learners. Due to the very small numbers at the school, there are limited opportunities for varied pair and group working. The headteacher has introduced shared learning days with Clachan Primary School where children work well together in pairs and groups. Children respond well when given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning such as developing their understanding of environmental issues. Teachers should extend this good practice to other areas of the curriculum. I have asked teachers to discuss children's learning with them more to help them know their strengths as learners and what they need to do to improve. By P6, children use information and communications technology (ICT) well for a range of purposes, including carrying out research and publishing the school newspaper. The school provides regular opportunities for children to learn outdoors in the school garden and playground and on the nearby beach. This is allowing children to learn and apply skills in literacy, numeracy and science in relevant and real-life contexts.

Across the school, children are making good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. They are capable of progressing at a faster pace. Children's listening and talking skills are developing well and they are confident when presenting talks in class and at school shows in the village hall. Children read with confidence and can discuss their favourite authors. The school recognises the need to improve children's writing. New approaches to developing children's writing skills are beginning to have a positive impact. In mathematics, all children are successful in written calculations. They successfully applied their knowledge and understanding of volume and finance to determine how much it cost to fill a plant pot to enable them to sell plants for a profit at

the school fair. Overall, children are developing good problem-solving skills. They would benefit from more opportunities to apply these skills in challenging, real-life contexts. Children have a sound understanding of environmental issues and healthy lifestyles. Their skills in music, French and ICT are developing well. Children are taking responsibility for their learning through their 'forest school' work and are learning how to 'risk take' safely. The school is aware of the need to track children's progress in their learning and achievements more efficiently to ensure that all children are doing as well as they can.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff know children and their families well. Children feel safe and well cared for in school. Shared learning days with Clachan Primary School support children's social and emotional needs well through enabling them to work collaboratively in a range of group settings and socialise with children of their own age. I have asked the school to ensure a brisker pace in children's learning. Teachers give clear explanations but need to develop their questioning skills further to challenge children's thinking. Staff are reviewing how they plan children's learning. They need to develop their understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and use this to develop the curriculum. They are developing interdisciplinary learning to ensure children are making links in their learning across appropriate curricular areas. Staff make effective use of the local environment for learning. The school now needs to review courses and programmes in a number of areas including health and wellbeing, science and technologies. The school has effective arrangements to support children when they enter P1 and when they transfer to Tarbert Academy.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher has quickly and accurately identified key areas of the school's work which require to be developed. She has a clear plan to bring about improvement. She has won the trust of staff, parents and children and is proving herself to be a strong leader. The school is now seeking and responding to the views of children and their parents. Staff are aware there is scope to strengthen further the school's approaches to evaluating its work. More remains to be done to develop approaches used to assess and track children's attainment and progress in learning. Staff and children are beginning to evaluate teaching and learning. With the leadership of the headteacher, staff are keen to work together as a team and all are committed to improving outcomes for children.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Happy, confident and articulate children who are proud of their school.
- Very positive relationships between staff and children.
- The leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of staff to securing school improvement.

I discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school. This is what I agreed with them.

- Develop further methods of assessing, tracking and monitoring children's progress.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum taking full account of Curriculum for Excellence guidance.
- Further develop self-evaluation to ensure continuing improvement in children's experiences and achievements.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. With support from the local authority the school will be able to make the necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer along with the local authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Peter Gollogly
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/SkipnessPrimarySchoolArgyll.asp>.

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.