

20 August 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Kirn Primary School and Nursery Class
Argyll and Bute Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We 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 us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including the way in which the school provides evidence of children's progress in learning and achievement and its approaches to supporting children with additional support needs. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children in the nursery and across the school learn and achieve to a high standard. In the nursery, children have consistently good opportunities to make choices and take responsibility for their own learning. They participate very enthusiastically in a daily 'play, do and review' session which helps them to plan aspects of their learning. They approach their chosen tasks with confidence and achieve success in a variety of contexts. Older children display an exceptionally high level of independence in leading their own learning throughout the session. At all stages, children behave impeccably and demonstrate highly responsible attitudes and respect to staff, visitors and to each other. In all classes, children are motivated and engaged in their learning within the calm, purposeful atmosphere. Highly imaginative displays in classrooms and around the school which are well linked to learning contribute to the stimulating, learning environment. Children enjoy sharing their learning and regularly lead parent workshops where they explain confidently the mathematics and writing strategies that they are using. Children are highly involved in evaluating aspects of their own learning. They can describe what they are good at and talk about the targets they have set themselves with their teacher. Children benefit from carefully planned lessons with clear learning outcomes, skilful questioning, and investigative challenges. This results in high-quality learning and teaching which is impacting very positively on children's confidence and progress.

In the nursery, learning targets are identified for each child and shared regularly with parents. Children are developing their early literacy skills well. Most children can say a few basic words in French such as greetings and colours. A few can recognise and write numbers beyond ten. Within the very positive culture which encourages and

celebrates personal achievement, children at all stages of the school demonstrate their confidence and success in a wide range of ways. These include leadership, teamwork, strategic thinking and problem solving, creativity, learning enterprising skills and how to be a good citizen. Children have undertaken significant work to improve environmental awareness across the school and as a result have achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland green flag. The pupil council and children's activities to support the 'One Planet Picnic' focusing on food sustainability resulted in the school being awarded first prize in a national competition. At the primary stages, children are making very good progress in English and literacy particularly at the early years and upper primary stages. Many at all stages are making exceptional progress in writing. By P6 and P7, most children are using sophisticated research skills to find and share information about their topic 'Earth and beyond'. At all stages, children's spelling, punctuation and grammar are well developed. They take advantage of the very good opportunities to read for pleasure and discuss their reading with real writers. Across the primary stages, children respond very positively to increasingly challenging mathematical tasks. By P7, pupils can use mathematical formulae to calculate the radius, circumference and the volume of spheres. The imaginative outdoor learning programme provides real life opportunities for children to apply a range of numeracy and mathematic skills.

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

There are major strengths in the way that staff across the school support children to develop and learn. Across the nursery and school, staff use the principles of Curriculum for Excellence to plan children's learning in a well-considered and meaningful way. Higher-achieving children in the nursery have very good opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills along with P1 children. Staff in the nursery and P1 plan learning effectively. This is helping to ease children's move from the nursery to P1. Across the primary stages, the curriculum motivates children and increases their self-esteem by providing them with exciting learning experiences and encouraging the development of important core skills and positive behaviour. In P5 to P7, each teacher takes a lead responsibility for delivering specific aspects of the curriculum. This ensures that teachers work closely together, sharing effective approaches to learning and teaching, standards and expectations. As a result, almost all children approach more challenging tasks confidently. Staff show very high-quality care and support to children in the school. The nursery works closely with parents and partners to meet the needs of individual children. Individualised education programmes are in place for children who need them. Staff need to adapt further their daily planning to take account of children's different abilities. When needed, staff work with parents to help them to manage children's behaviour more effectively at home. The headteacher and staff intervene promptly to ensure that children who need extra help and those at risk of missing out receive tailored support. Highly-skilled support staff provide a very wide range of well-targeted support for children including those with learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural needs and health needs. Partner agencies contribute very effectively to supporting children with additional support needs.

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

As a result of very strong processes for evaluating the quality of its work, the school has an accurate picture of what it does well and what it needs to improve. A deep review of learning and teaching facilitated by headteachers of local schools is providing helpful and supportive comment about how well the school is supporting children to make progress. The school aims to further develop its arrangements to assess and track children's progress and achievements. To do this well, staff would like more opportunities to work together to evaluate the quality of children's work. Parents' and children's views and suggestions are sought regularly in a variety of ways and acted upon. The headteacher is inspirational. Highly regarded by all members of the school community, he has a very clear vision for the school for which he has gained the support of all staff, parents and partner agencies. He is highly committed to continually improving the quality of learning which the school provides and encourages dynamic and creative approaches to learning and teaching. The headteacher undertakes rigorous monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching and provides detailed feedback to teachers. This has led to significant improvements in the quality of children's experiences and achievements. Two principal teachers provide strong and very effective support to the headteacher in leading and developing improvements across the school.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident, respectful children who have a clear love of learning and great pride in their school.
- Innovative approaches to the organisation of the curriculum to ensure children develop important skills through exciting, deep and coherent learning experiences.
- High-quality support for children who require extra help in their learning.
- Effective partnerships with parents, volunteers, partners and the local community to enrich and extend children's learning.
- Inspirational and strong leadership of the headteacher which drives forward improvements to ensure all children make very good progress in their learning.

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

- Continue to develop day-to-day planning of learning to take account of differences in children's abilities.
- Further develop opportunities for teachers to work together to evaluate the quality and standard of children's work.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of innovative practice which we would like to explore further in order to share the practice with others. As a result we will work with the school and local authority in order to record and share more widely the innovative practice.

Dr Kate Hannah

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/KirnPrimarySchoolArgyllandBute.asp>.

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