

30 October 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

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

Recently, as you may know, I inspected your child's school. During the inspection, I talked to parents and children and I 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 the school's successes and priorities for improvement. I looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including the way the school improves children's learning, teamwork and partnerships with parents. 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?

Children in the nursery and the school enjoy learning. They benefit most from the varied outdoor learning activities at the beach, in the forest and the wider community. Children are growing in confidence and they feel safe and secure in the welcoming learning environment. Children in the nursery class were motivated by a visitor who brought a range of small animals and 'mini beasts'. A few felt confident enough to touch the giant snail. Most children were able to make and sustain choices during play sessions. A few children would benefit from having a longer time for free play. I found the children in the primary class to be enthusiastic and keen to learn. They can talk knowledgeably about how well they are achieving. They now need to plan in more detail with their teachers and parents their future learning and set themselves more challenging targets. Children are kind, very well behaved and respectful. Older children support younger children very well both in and out of the classroom.

In the nursery class, children are making satisfactory progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. The majority can talk confidently about their ideas and experiences. They do not always listen closely to each other and adults in group activities. They enjoy making marks on paper and they can identify their own name in print. Most show a keen interest in traditional stories, rhymes and singing games. In play activities, most children use numbers appropriately. They are beginning to develop their early mathematical skills in counting, measure and shape. In the primary class, children are making good progress in English language and mathematics. Children are capable of progressing at a faster pace. In mathematics, most children can carry out mental and written calculations accurately. A few would benefit from adopting a wider range of problem-solving strategies and using mental calculation. They learn best when they work in contexts which are meaningful. They

used their literacy and numeracy skills effectively during forest schools activities, successfully designing and describing the home they had built for a small animal to live in safely. In language, most children listen well to each other and to adults. They confidently express their ideas and opinions. Children's progress in reading and writing has improved recently. Children enjoy being read to but they could show greater interest in reading for pleasure. They write some interesting stories and factual accounts. New teaching approaches are helping children to improve the quality of their writing. They now need to write for a wider range of purposes and at length. The presentation of children's written work is improving. Children are making strong progress in other areas of the curriculum. They have a sound understanding of sustainability and healthy lifestyles. Their skills in music, art and Gaelic are developing well.

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

Nursery staff know children and their families well. They respond sensitively to children's individual social and emotional needs. Staff work closely with other agencies and the staff in the primary school to ensure children with additional support needs receive the right kind of support. Staff use the principles of Curriculum for Excellence well to plan children's learning. They make effective use of the local environment for learning. Staff work increasingly well as a team. Across the nursery and the school, children who need extra help with learning receive well planned support from support staff and visiting professionals. Nursery and primary children are very proud of their learning folders which contain examples of their achievements. There is scope to develop these further to include what children will learn next. Nursery staff need to plan activities and provide resources which challenge and extend children's thinking more effectively. In the primary class, the tasks and activities which teachers plan for children are almost always set at the right level of difficulty. Children benefit considerably from their regular involvement with others locally in the village and nationally through their work to support charities. Parents value highly the school's inclusive ethos and feel their views and opinions are acted upon.

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

I am confident that the school will continue to improve the quality of its work and with the continued support from the education authority has the capacity to secure further improvement. The headteacher since her appointment has worked successfully with staff to improve children's learning experiences, the curriculum and partnerships through more effective teamwork. More remains to be done to improve the approaches used to assess and track children's attainment and progress in learning. Staff also need to have a shared understanding of how they contribute to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching and the further development of the curriculum.

This inspection of your school and nursery class found the following key strengths.

- Happy, confident children.
- Children's learning experiences outdoors.
- Relationships with parents.
- The impact of improved teamwork on the ethos of the nursery and school.

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

- Continue to improve children's attainment and achievement in the nursery class.
- Develop further methods of assessing and tracking children's progress in learning.
- Improve self-evaluation to bring about consistently high quality learning, teaching and curriculum development.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

On behalf of Education Scotland, I am satisfied with the overall quality of provision. I am confident that with the continued support of the education authority, the school's self-evaluation processes will secure further improvement. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The local authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

Marion Burns
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/RhunahaorinePrimarySchoolArgyllandBute.asp>

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