

23 October 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bunessan Primary School and Pre-5 Unit
Argyll and Bute Council**

In June 2010, HM Inspectors published a report on your child's school. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another report in August 2011. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting headteacher and other staff how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in May 2011 and at aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the acting headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well children are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children at Bunessan Primary School and Pre-5 Unit are very keen to learn and achieve. There remains scope to enable them to do this more effectively. Children are responding well to the more interesting and varied approaches to learning that staff are continuing to use. These include children working together in pairs and groups. However, these practices are not used often enough or consistently enough across the whole school. Learning remains too closely directed by teachers and, as a result, children are not sufficiently active and independent in their learning. At the early stages of primary, children are not building sufficiently on their experiences in the pre-5 unit of learning through play. Staff have made a start to giving children some feedback to help them improve their writing. However, at all stages, children need to be supported more in identifying their own strengths and in knowing how to improve their learning.

Children continue to contribute to the life of the school and wider community. They recently staged a very successful Diamond Jubilee celebration at which they demonstrated their talents in music. The increased focus on working together is extending children's skills in listening and talking. Children now enjoy writing for a fuller range of purposes. More remains to be done on developing children's skills in explaining techniques used by authors. In the pre-5 unit, children listen very well to stories being read to them and ask questions to explore their ideas. At all stages, children's understanding of mathematics is being enhanced by the use of more real-life situations. The school recognises that it needs to have a clear picture of how well all children are progressing in their learning. An approach to checking and

discussing children's achievements is still to be developed. Overall, children are capable of making better progress at all stages.

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

Staff have made some progress in the way that they support children to develop and learn. However, there remains significant scope for further improvements. Of late, all children have benefited from more opportunities to learn outdoors. Children's learning is more linked to their local area with those at P5-P7, for example, learning about crofting. At P3-P7, a visiting specialist is giving children an opportunity to learn Gaelic. The school is now providing children with two hours of physical education while continuing to improve the quality of activities. Staff need more support to design programmes of learning that ensure full coverage of a broad range of subjects. In doing so, children's skills, knowledge and understanding need to be developed in a progressive, well-paced and challenging way as they move through the school. Staff need to provide children and their parents with better information on the progress being made by children in their learning. Children who need help with their learning continue to be well supported. There also needs to be an increased focus on supporting higher-achieving children. In general, teachers need to have higher expectations of what children can achieve.

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

There remain important weaknesses in the school's approaches to improving the quality of its work. Substantial work has still to be done on improving children's attainment, the quality of the curriculum, arrangements for self-evaluation and the strategic leadership of the school. As a result of their recent involvement in developments to make the school better, staff are more motivated to sustain steps taken so far towards achieving improvements. The recently appointed acting headteacher has established positive relationships with parents, children and staff. With continued support from the education authority, she needs to establish a clear and better paced approach to securing improvements.

What happens next?

While there is evidence of improvements in some aspects of the school's work, the pace of change is too slow. More remains to be done to ensure improvements in key areas agreed at the original inspection in 2010. Additionally, some improvements previously noted, such as better communication and consultation with parents, have not been maintained. As a result, we are not yet satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We have asked the school and the education authority to develop an immediate action plan, the progress of which we will monitor throughout the year. Another follow-through visit will be made to the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. This will result in a further letter to parents to report on the extent of the improvement that has been achieved.

Joan C Esson
HM Inspector

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation. You can contact us at enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact 01506 600200, or write to us at the above address or e-mail: feedback@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk.