

9 September 2014

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 further reports in August 2011, October 2012 and August 2013. 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 the original inspection and at other 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?**

Across all stages, we continue to note improvements in the way that children learn and achieve. Children are very pleasant and keen to learn. Children in the pre-5 unit and P1 now play and learn together. They continue to benefit from the 'thinking mat' approach for planning and talking about their learning. Staff have now extended further this approach to show how well children are achieving. Parents of children in the pre-5 unit and P1 told us of the benefits of the regular meetings to share with them their children's learning and progress. At the primary stages, children are motivated by the approach to science as it enables them to follow their individual interests. At all stages, children are making more use of information communications technology to enhance their learning. Children have regular opportunities for making choices and decisions. Those in P5-P7 have been practising opera singing and they are now planning a trip to the Island of Coll to sing at a cèilidh. Children are more aware of the skills that they are developing by taking part in events. Staff now need to improve the range of approaches that they use when children are learning in mathematics and language.

Teachers have started to improve the way they check children's progress in mathematics and language. By P7, children are making appropriate progress in almost all aspects of mathematics and language. They are confident in making mental calculations. On the whole, P7 are enthusiastic about reading books and talk well about authors' styles of writing. However, children at all stages need more support in talking for a range of purposes. Inspectors noted good examples of

childrens' skills in writing at P1. At the other stages, we have asked teachers to ensure that children are writing regularly and in detail. The school does not yet have a clear picture of how well children are progressing and achieving in all curriculum areas. To assist in achieving this, staff need to plan assessment to show clearly the progress that children are making. At the primary stages, parents need more information about their children's progress.

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

While the school has improved how it supports children to develop and learn, there remains scope for more progress. An experienced headteacher has recently been advising staff on planning and setting work at the right level of difficulty for children. Staff still need to have an increased focus on challenging higher-achieving learners. We have asked the school to give prompt attention to including long and short-term targets in the support plans of those children who need help with their learning. This will help ensure children make suitable progress. At all stages, staff continue to plan projects which are enjoyable, relevant and develop children's knowledge and skills well. The project on war is giving children a real-life context in which to use their knowledge of numeracy to raise money for restoring the local war memorial. The local community contributed very well to children's learning on what it was like to live in Mull in medieval times. Through this, children learnt traditional skills such as carding wool and making oatcakes. However, teachers need to set clearer expectations of what children will be learning in each curriculum area. Visiting specialists continue to enhance children's learning in, for example, Gaelic language and singing.

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

The acting headteacher continues to enjoy positive relationships with parents. She is approachable and welcoming. She has worked with children and staff to establish the school's vision and aims. Staff have continued to improve children's learning experiences and aspects of their progress. Argyll and Bute Council seconded a part-time, experienced headteacher to support the school in March 2014. Prior to that date, staff were not making enough progress with the school's plans for improvement. Since March 2014, the part-time support headteacher has put in place some programmes to help strengthen the curriculum. She has also given staff well-judged advice to help improve their practice. The school is still not benefiting from having a permanent headteacher to lead staff in working together, and to give clear direction to ensure well-paced improvement.

### **What happens next?**

While there continues to be evidence of improvements in some aspects of the school's work, we are not yet satisfied with the overall quality of provision. During the inspection, Argyll and Bute Council informed us that they had secured a permanent headteacher for Bunessan Primary School and Pre-5 Unit from January 2015. The lack of stability in staffing remains unhelpful to the school in maintaining and sustaining improvements. Parents continue to be unhappy with the uncertainty over the school's leadership. As a result of this visit, we have asked Argyll and Bute Council for their plans for the leadership of the school until January

2015. We have also asked the school and Argyll and Bute Council to update their action plan for improvement. Throughout the year, we will continue to meet Argyll and Bute Council and school staff to monitor their progress in meeting targets in this action plan. We are also asking the school and Argyll and Bute Council to keep parents regularly informed of progress in improving the school. Within a year of the publication of this letter, we will ask Argyll and Bute Council for a detailed update on the school's progress for improvement. We will also ask parents for their views on how well the school is improving. Based on the progress being made, we will at that point decide whether we will undertake another inspection, or ask Argyll and Bute Council to write a report to parents detailing the school's progress in meeting the action points outlined in this letter. Depending on the outcome, we may publish another letter to parents on the extent of improvements being achieved. We will discuss with Argyll and Bute Council how Education Scotland will continue to engage with the school to build capacity.

Joan C Esson  
HM Inspector

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.

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