

5 November 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Kilchattan Primary School and Nursery Class
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 community involvement, planning learning and tracking children's progress. 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?

I found that across the school and nursery class, children are learning and achieving well. Children settle well into the nursery class and confidently choose their learning activities. They are content and sociable with one another and adults. They all receive attention and encouragement and can concentrate well. They are independent when changing into outdoor clothes, washing their hands and tidying up their toys. Children should now be given even more opportunities to take responsibility in the nursery. Staff should ensure that all planned activities are challenging enough to extend children's learning. Children in the school have a positive attitude to learning. The climate for learning is inclusive and supportive. Children respond very well to active approaches to learning, particularly in practical work. For example, they worked very well together when designing, gathering materials and building their coracle. Staff now need to continue to improve their approaches to discussing what has been learned with children so that they know what they need to do to improve. Children show respect to one another and to all adults who come into contact with the school. They are well supported by staff and the wider island community to develop a range of skills for learning, life and work. Children have worked alongside archaeologists and taken part in local digs. They gain in confidence by presenting a summary of their learning to islanders at the end of session and also by performing their Christmas show in the village hall. Children have experienced a number of worthwhile enterprising activities including making and selling worm juice and paper logs.

Across the school and nursery class, children are achieving well in literacy and numeracy. In the nursery class, children talk confidently to each other and adults during their play. They engage well in conversations and are developing a good vocabulary which helps them to express their ideas. They listen well during group

discussions and enjoy regular story-telling opportunities. Staff have recently introduced some simple Gaelic words to help children have a better understanding of their island's culture. Children recognise a number of shapes, can continue a pattern and are beginning to count. Staff now need to provide more learning activities which help children to explore number, shape and pattern more regularly. In the school, children are making good progress in English language and literacy. They are very confident when talking to one another and adults. Children enjoy reading and can transfer ideas from books they have read into their writing. For example, they studied 'A Christmas Carol' then wrote their own pieces in the style of Charles Dickens. They produced extended pieces of writing for the Colonsay Book Festival. Children work closely with the editor of the 'Corncrake' which is the island's online community newsletter. They submit articles, write stories, share their play scripts and celebrate and share their successes. Most children have a sound grasp of numerical processes. They can apply these skills in relevant contexts, for example, when pricing and selling their recycled paper logs and in using measuring skills when building their coracle. Children are aware of healthy food and what makes a healthy lifestyle.

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

Across the school and the nursery class, staff provide a high level of pastoral care and support. They are kind and caring in their interactions with children and are responsive to individual needs. Staff provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for children. Tasks and activities are set at an appropriate level for most children. Staff work with a range of outside support agencies when needed to support children and families. Appropriate support plans are in place to help children in their learning. Staff should now consider how to make some activities more challenging and ensure that learning takes place at a brisk enough pace. The headteacher, working with Argyll and Bute Council, has recently reviewed the curriculum. A three-year curriculum plan is now in place. This overview identifies central themes relevant to children's learning. For example, 'Our island heritage'. Staff are gaining in confidence in using Curriculum for Excellence guidance to plan learning. There is a clear focus on promoting learning outdoors. Children have regular opportunities to learn outdoors and staff make good use of the island environment to support learning. This allows children to explore and investigate their natural environment. Children are developing their skills in information and communications technology well and all children have been given an i-Pad to assist them in sharing learning at home. They are improving their musical skills by playing together with staff in the school band.

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

Parents and the wider community are very committed to supporting the school. They give very effective support both by contributing to learning and in raising funds. Each year, children take part in a residential visit off the island. In recent years, they have travelled to Orkney and County Antrim. Since her arrival last year, the headteacher has audited the work of the school and compiled a realistic action plan. The headteacher has mainly been responsible for this work. She should now involve staff more in planning and measuring the impact of improvements. The headteacher has built positive relationships with staff, parents, children and the wider community. She is very committed to continuing to improve outcomes for children. There are a number of appropriate approaches in place to monitor the work of the school. Staff should now

work together to agree how to assess and record children's progress, set future targets and capture each child's learning journey. I am confident that with the commitment of staff and the continued support of Argyll and Bute Council the school will continue to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Courteous, respectful children who have a positive attitude to learning.
- Strong support from the island community to engage with children and enhance their learning.
- The positive approach by staff in using the island environment to support learning outdoors.
- Teamwork of the headteacher and staff and their commitment to improving learning and teaching.

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

- Improve approaches to tracking and recording children's progress and achievements.
- Continue to develop the curriculum and ensure a consistent approach to planning the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Develop self-evaluation further and involve staff more in measuring the difference that improvement priorities make to learning and achievement.

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 visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Argyll and Bute Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Isabel Robb
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/KilchattanPrimarySchoolArgyllandBute.asp>

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