

23 February 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Kilcreggan Primary School and Pre 5 Unit
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 school's 'curriculum map', personal learning planning and health and wellbeing. 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 enjoy coming to the Pre-5 unit. They play well together and demonstrate growing confidence. Staff are welcoming and maintain very positive relationships with families. Children explained to us how they had made soup using seasonal vegetables. A few children concentrated on tasks such as cutting and pasting, and digging for bugs outdoors. Staff need to spend more time talking to children about their learning. They should also take account of children's ideas to develop a broader range of learning experiences. All children at the primary stages are well behaved, confident, and respectful. They are beginning to develop an understanding of their own learning through the use of learning logs. They reflect on their learning weekly and share their work and learning targets with their parents. Staff need to involve children in planning and leading their own learning and setting themselves more demanding targets. Children are not always clear about what they are learning, why they are doing it and the next steps in their learning. They would benefit from better feedback on how to improve their work. Children's learning is enhanced by planned opportunities to use the school's outdoor learning environments for reading, playing, gardening and exploring nature. Many links with local clubs, services and festivals, as well as trips and excursions, enrich children's learning. Children are developing important life skills by taking on roles and responsibilities, running enterprising companies and leading activities and clubs. They could be learning from practical experiences like these more frequently within their classrooms.

Children in the Pre-5 unit are gaining independence through, for example, getting themselves ready to go outside. We have suggested that staff give them more opportunities to help set up, clear up and prepare snacks. Children speak confidently and listen attentively to stories. Although a few children recognise their names the

majority do not have a good awareness of the purpose of the written word. Some children are beginning to recognise numbers and can count, match, sort and order objects. Staff should do more to incorporate mathematical language into everyday routines. Children would benefit greatly from a wider range of creative and mark-making opportunities. At the primary stages children's achievements beyond the classroom are recognised and celebrated. They can gain accreditation through John Muir and Dynamic Youth Awards. Staff work hard to ensure that every child has opportunities to achieve beyond the classroom. The 'daily mile' walk or jog, is having a positive impact on children's fitness, and awareness of their health and wellbeing. When children move into P1 they make good progress in developing their literacy skills. Most can read simple texts independently and express their ideas clearly in writing. Although most children read for pleasure, the school's arrangements for teaching reading are not always challenging them. The continuing focus on grammar and comprehension is delaying children's progress in developing critical reading skills. Across the stages, children's spelling and punctuation is accurate, but the quality of their writing is not of a high enough standard. At the early stages children are developing good skills with numbers. At other stages, reliance on mathematics textbooks is delaying children's progress, particularly in developing problem solving and strategic thinking skills. The work that many of the children are being asked to do is not challenging enough. Children need more opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in real-life contexts. The school promotes positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles and builds children's skills effectively. Children have developed a good understanding of environmental issues through Eco-schools activities.

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

All staff provide a high level of pastoral care, support and encouragement to children. They use a 'Getting it right for every child' approach to support and include everyone in the school. Staff in the Pre-5 unit observe children as they play and use this to plan for future learning. They identify children who require additional support with their learning. Across the Pre-5 unit staff need to ensure that activities are appropriately challenging for the full range of developmental stages. Across the primary stages children are sometimes given different activities or split into groups to work on tasks set at the right level of difficulty. However, too often children are set the same task. Often these tasks are too easy for older or more able children. The school uses a range of assessments to identify and support children who are not making the expected progress in their learning. Those children who work with the Support for Learning teacher are making good progress towards achieving their short term targets. The school should carefully consider whether children's learning needs are best met by extracting them from the classroom. Staff should also continue to review the resources they use to support children. Pupil support assistants help children sensitively in class and deliver programmes designed by partner agencies such as health care professionals.

The Pre-5 curriculum is based on play and active learning. Staff try to take on board children's interests as a starting point for planning. We have asked staff to consider re-establishing the use of 'floor books', for example, to consult children on what they know and what they want to learn about. Children's experiences are enriched by visitors and trips within the local community. They need more planned opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in real life contexts. At the primary stages

the curriculum is based on the school's vision, values and aims. Local partners and community events contribute well to providing a curriculum with a local context. Staff recognise the important contribution of learning that takes place beyond the classroom. They have designed 'maps' of the skills they want children to develop. However, teachers need more support to understand how the curriculum should be delivered. Aspects of the curriculum, including opportunities for enterprise, are developing children's skills for life and work successfully. However, in lessons which focus on acquiring knowledge, children have too few opportunities to actively develop their skills through leading and applying their learning. The school's strategy for raising attainment in literacy and numeracy is not effective. Children's learning is not progressing as well as it could. Staff are not tracking accurately enough children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels. Pre-5 children are well supported to feel confident and excited about coming to school. Staff now need to work together to plan a progressive experience for children at the early level to ensure continuity and progression in learning from Pre-5 into P1. Transition arrangements between P7 and S1 are supported by the Hermitage Academy transition programme, 'Hooked on Hermitage'.

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

All staff are trying to improve the life and work of the school. They work together well to develop their thinking about how best to plan and develop the curriculum. However there remains significant scope to improve the curriculum in order to improve children's learning and raise attainment. The headteacher has established firmly the ethos of the school as a caring and inclusive one. She is well respected by staff and parents. Staff develop their practice through an appropriate range of professional learning opportunities, including discussions with colleagues from other schools. Teachers receive feedback on their planning and teaching and this now needs to be more closely focused on where improvement is most needed. The school's arrangements for evaluating its work do not accurately identify what is working well and what needs to be improved further.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Well behaved, motivated children who respect one another and are proud of their school.
- Children's understanding of how to keep safe, healthy, and active.
- The nurturing approach and inclusive ethos in the school.
- Opportunities for achievement, including clubs led by children and parents.

We discussed with staff and Argyll and Bute Council how they might continue to improve the school and Pre-5 unit. This is what we agreed with them.

- Raise attainment in literacy and numeracy across the Pre-5 unit and school.
- Improve learning experiences to provide children with more challenge in their learning.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure that children build on their knowledge and skills as they progress through the school.
- Review systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving the work of the school.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Argyll and Bute Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within 12 months of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Jacqueline Sinclair
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/KilcreeganPrimarySchoolArgyllandBute.asp>

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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