

18 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Nesting Primary School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with the headteacher and the local authority and carried out a virtual meeting to Nesting Primary School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our virtual visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Nesting Primary School has experienced significant staffing challenges during the last 18 months. The headteacher has very effectively managed the challenges of staff absence and periods of remote learning, whilst remaining focused on school improvement.

The headteacher and staff developed and reviewed approaches to support children and families during the pandemic. Staff worked collaboratively during the remote learning periods and maintained regular contact with families. Parents and carers have had contact with staff through a variety of platforms. They report the support, care and communication received as being essential to their family wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The education authority's digital strategy ensured all families received information technology equipment and were supported to use it during periods of remote learning. In addition, staff provided a variety of resources including paper based packs and blogs, to help share learning from home. All learners were supported on an individual basis.

The balance between wellbeing needs and curriculum based learning was kept under review. The school have prioritised health and wellbeing to support recovery. The headteacher and staff have used Pupil Equity Funding to ensure children are supported to develop and consolidate their collaborative and communication skills. This in turn supports children's ability to successfully learn individually and in groups after periods of remote learning.

Positive relationships have been developed further between families and the whole school community of Nesting Primary School. There are regular opportunities for children and families to share their views and make suggestions via online questionnaires and phone calls. The headteacher and staff are committed to the centrality of a supportive ethos at all times. Moving forward, this will continue to encourage and motivate learners to maximise their ability to learn and be part of their local context.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Since the original inspection, there has been significant progress in developing staff approaches to monitoring and tracking children's progress to ensure attainment is raised. The headteacher has worked collaboratively with staff to introduce, review and agree a tracking format linked to literacy and numeracy progression frameworks. Staff are using this well to identify gaps in learning and plan interventions as required. The headteacher and staff use this information to plan and deliver individualised learning for all children. The headteacher leads termly whole school monitoring and tracking meetings as well as providing regular opportunities to discuss tracking at whole class and individual levels. As a result, staff are more confident in their professional judgements and continue to develop the use of data to inform future planning and assessment.

There has been good progress made in developing the school's approach to planning and assessment to develop consistently high quality learning and teaching. The headteacher and staff have jointly developed a planning format that better reflects a variety of assessment approaches. Teachers work effectively with learning support workers to assist children who require additional support in their learning. Teachers engaged with parents and carers during periods of remote learning to gather ideas about children's interests and build upon their prior learning and achievements outside of school. Staff should continue to build upon this engagement with children in planning their learning to develop further the school's focus on creativity and problem solving skills.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Shetland Islands Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality its education service.

Louise Phillips
HM Inspector