

8 February 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 Duror Primary School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Duror Primary School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children, young people 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 visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

During the pandemic, staff supported children and their families well. Due to the rural community, children faced real challenges during isolation as they had very limited contact with other people. In addition, the school has experienced significant disruption due to COVID-19, including staff absence. Despite these challenges, staff provided individual, bespoke support to children and their families. Parents spoke very positively about the support offered to them during the pandemic. Staff supported families to access food vouchers and ensured that all children had access to digital devices. They also provided dongles to ensure that every family accessed the online learning which was provided. Since the return to school, staff have identified gaps in learning and have taken positive steps to address these and meet children's learning and wellbeing needs very well.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Since the original inspection, there is now a new headteacher and principal teacher in post. Commendably, they have made a significant impact on the school. Together with staff, they are making very good progress in improving the school and addressing gaps in learning due to COVID-19. Staff now plan learning together to help ensure children experience a more joined up approach to their learning across the week. They now keep careful records of what children have learned previously. This allows children to build on their learning more effectively as they move through the school.

Children are now able to work independently and are more involved in their learning. Staff now provide experiences that children find enjoyable as it reflects better their age and stage of development. Across all stages, children are actively involved in their learning. They can identify what they would like to learn and share this with their parents online. Children are now more confident in attempting learning tasks and use peer support when working things out. They can now work in pairs or small groups and remain on task until they have completed their work. Staff focus on ensuring children are ready to learn and work hard to ensure children stay engaged and on task. Older children have opportunities to take

responsibility for their own learning and to take the lead in learning. They have many opportunities to work cooperatively with other children across other schools.

Children's learning is monitored carefully by class teachers and the headteacher. Staff now use clearer approaches to assessing children's progress. These are linked closely to the National Benchmarks which helps staff make accurate judgements about children's attainment. Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, there is clear evidence that children's attainment is improving. All children show good progress in writing with older children beginning to write at length. Staff have taken steps to improve children's grammar, spelling and punctuation and ensure it is taught regularly. Children are now improving their skills in mathematics and numeracy. Their skills in working out calculations mentally are improving. Staff have worked well with the Highland Council literacy and numeracy team to bring about these improvements. They took part in online learning in numeracy to improve further the quality of their teaching.

Overall, staff have worked hard to make significant improvements to what children learn. They have improved the quality of learning and teaching and how children are assessed. There is now a calm purposeful atmosphere across the school. As a result, children's needs are now met well and attainment is beginning to improve.

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. They 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. The Highland Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector