

14 December 2021

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 Glassary 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 Glassary 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 visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

The headteacher and staff at Glassary Primary School have responded well to the needs of their community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers faced particular challenges delivering remote learning due to poor connectivity within their rural setting. However, teachers worked well together to find creative ways to overcome these challenge including setting up a drive-through collection point for accessing resources. These approaches helped ensure all children had access to resources to support learning at home.

COVID-19 has affected the pace of change. However, the headteacher has ensured progress in learning and attainment is continuing despite challenging and changing circumstances. The staff team is now ready to increase the pace of change.

All staff are acutely aware of the impact the pandemic has had on children and their families. The health and wellbeing of children is central to the school's recovery plan. Staff are working well to support the emotional and social wellbeing of children. They have introduced a shared language to help children talk about their feelings and worries. Regular emotional check-ins are providing children with important opportunities to talk to a trusted adult.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Since her appointment in November 2020, the headteacher has brought a calm and supportive style of leadership to the school community. Her approach is providing much needed reassurance and support to children, their families and staff in continuing times of challenge and change. Staff value her open approach and the increased roles she has given them in leading change across the school. All staff, led by the headteacher, have made satisfactory progress in addressing school improvement. They have a clear vision for the school and are acting on the steps they need to take to continue to improve. Children spoke positively about being back at school with their friends. They value the positive relationships they have both with staff and peers.

Staff have agreed a set of principles as a basis for the curriculum at Glassary Primary School. Working together, staff have developed an approach to the curriculum which better reflects the local context. Teachers are using this to plan relevant learning for children using consistent planning tools to plan learning across the curriculum. This is supporting children to make progress as they move through the school. Teachers should continue to ensure children experience learning that helps them to build on what they know, think for themselves, and is at the right level of difficulty across the curriculum.

Teachers now use progression pathways successfully to plan learning across the curriculum. They have engaged in more focused work to develop a few areas including literacy and English, numeracy and mathematics, health and wellbeing and social studies. In the younger class, teachers now plan literacy in a more consistent way. They are helping children to make connections with their learning in reading and writing. This is improving learning experiences for younger children. Teachers in the older class are building on this to inform their approaches to teaching literacy.

Teachers at the early stages are introducing a more play-based approach to learning. This is leading to children having more choice in their learning and is helping them to develop their independent learning skills. Older children are asked about what they would like to learn. Children value the increased opportunities they have to shape their learning. Across the school, teachers should continue to develop approaches to learning and teaching to promote curiosity and creativity.

Teachers are continuing to work together to improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. They have taken part in a range of professional learning activities in school and with staff from other schools. This is supporting them to continue to improve children's experiences. The headteacher has introduced a structured calendar to support planning and assessment. Teachers are using this new structure well to plan learning that builds on what children know.

The headteacher has introduced a system to help teachers make sure that children are making progress with their learning. Teachers are beginning to use this well to identify children's strengths and areas where they need more support.

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 are addressing the recommendations from the original inspection. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Argyll and Bute 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.

Marion Carlton
HM Inspector