

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 St Andrew's 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 St Andrew's 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 acting 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

Staff in St Andrew's Primary School developed a comprehensive online learning provision during school closure periods. In addition, a range of resources were made available at the school gate. Where necessary, these were delivered to homes by school staff to ensure that families were well supplied with appropriate resources to support learning. Home visits also allowed staff to offer support and advice as necessary. Staff engaged with all families to ensure they had access to digital technology and provided support where necessary on how to use this.

Working collaboratively with partner agencies, staff provided support for families to deal with the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents and carers told us that they appreciated the high level of support they received during the school closure periods. They valued the 'robust online school' that the staff provided which meant that their children's progress in learning continued despite the school building closure.

Since the re-opening of the school building, there have been incidents of staff and children having to isolate. However, children and staff have been able to resume face-to-face learning and teaching while dealing with this disruption. Staff rightly prioritised health and wellbeing activities to support children on their return to school.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The school has undergone considerable change in leadership in recent years and as a result, has experienced a period of uncertainty. The acting headteacher, supported well by local authority staff, has worked tirelessly to create a culture where all staff work as a strong, cohesive team to drive forward improvement. As a result, the pace of change has increased significantly over the past year. The acting headteacher has had a relentless focus on improving children's progress, learning and achievement. It is clear that all staff are now ambitious for their children to do well. All staff have engaged in professional learning which has had a direct impact on improving children's learning. The pupil council has created child

friendly improvement priorities based on the school's improvement priorities which are displayed throughout the school.

The acting headteacher has developed a strong self-evaluation and leadership culture across the school. Staff and children are an integral part of ongoing evaluation and improvement. All staff and children undertake leadership roles which have enabled them to lead improvements. All children are part of a committee. This allows them to have a voice in the running of the school. The pupil council has created child friendly improvement priorities which are displayed throughout the school. This allows children to reflect on the improvements which have been made in the school. As a result of these approaches, children feel they are a valued part of the St Andrew's Primary School community. Staff are continuing to embed the vision, values and aims within the wider school community in order to reinforce their importance in delivering high quality learning and teaching. Staff should continue to evaluate the impact of the improvement priorities to ensure these continue to improve progress in learning and raise the attainment of all children.

School staff have worked well together to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school. As a result, most children are engaged in their learning. Children tell us they particularly enjoyed discussing the pros and cons of a bridge from the mainland to Rothesay. Teachers should monitor the length of time children are given to carry out tasks. There are episodes of learning that are too long leading to some children disengaging from their learning. Children enjoy learning outdoors. During our visit, the children spoke enthusiastically about the accelerated reading programme and felt it was improving their reading skills and enjoyment of reading. The newly developed school library enables children to engage appropriately with a variety of texts. Children are able to discuss their favourite authors competently and discuss different types of reading material. Opportunities to demonstrate literacy and numeracy skills across other curricular areas support children to apply their learning in different contexts. For example, teachers develop children's numeracy skills through outdoor learning and using digital technologies. The school should continue with plans to develop a three year overview of the curriculum to ensure children receive their entitlement to a broad curriculum. Curriculum pathways should include opportunities for children to develop their skills for learning, life and work in motivating contexts.

Staff are now more confident in using data to identify any trends and patterns in children's attainment. Senior leaders and staff regularly discuss the progress of individual children. Support interventions are beginning to impact positively on children's progress. However, there are some children across the school who could achieve more. Staff should continue to focus on ensuring that learning is planned at the right level of difficulty to raise the attainment of all children. The level of attainment should be higher for some of the children in the school. The school should also continue to plan, implement and monitor interventions to impact positively on children's learning across all curriculum areas.

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 also been making progress in taking forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection. We recognise that the school needs some more time to implement fully its priorities for improvement. We have asked Argyll and Bute Council to provide us with further information about the school's progress within one year of the publication of this letter. We will work together with local authority officers to agree what will happen next. Should we require another visit to the school, we will inform parents/carers. Otherwise, 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 its education service.

Dr Noreen Phillips
HM Inspector