

30 August 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 Dalrymple Primary School and Early Childhood Centre, 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 Dalrymple Primary School and Early Childhood Centre. 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

Staff in Dalrymple Early Childhood Centre (ECC) and Primary School have supported children and their families well to deal with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new headteacher and depute headteacher model and lead their teams well. They have rightly prioritised a whole school focus on wellbeing, and that children make progress in their learning. During this challenging time, the headteacher has led a refresh of the ECC and school's values and vision. All of this has contributed to the development of a culture where children, families and staff feel valued.

The staff team is committed to individual and establishment wide professional learning. This includes learning on local, national and global platforms. Staff feel motivated to use their learning in their work and this has had a positive impact on staff wellbeing during the pandemic.

Staff report that improved collegiate working has enhanced teamwork and relationships. New approaches to communication, including digital platforms have provided quality time for discussions where everyone can participate. As a result, there is increased confidence across the ECC and primary stages where staff feel equipped to better support the wellbeing and learning of children and their families.

During periods of remote learning, the staff team used information about individual children and families effectively to identify children who required support. They ensured children had access to learning in hubs, at home and that they benefited from a range of supports such as laptops, and learning packs. Staff used information about children's progress to plan learning where gaps were evident. Throughout the pandemic, the team has continued to develop relationships with a range of partners who also reach out to families across the school community.

Staff worked well with parents to provide appropriate transition arrangements for pre-school children and children returning to learning in class. They liaised regularly with parents to reduce their anxieties in relation to COVID-19 recovery and providing education safely within the school. This well-planned support resulted in a smooth return to ECC and school in August 2021. Parents speak positively about approaches taken to support children re-engage with school. Parents feel that school leaders and the wider staff team listen to and act upon their ideas, suggestions and concerns.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The school and ECC have made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in previous inspections.

It is clear that the school and ECC now work well together and there is a sense of team across the school. On our previous visit we noted that leadership of the ECC was improving, it is now evident that leadership across the school and ECC is now more coherent and the ECC team feel more involved in the life of the school. This has supported them to continue to address the recommendations from previous inspection visits.

Children attending the ECC enjoy access to a range of indoor and outdoor play areas. We observed happy and confident children making choices in their activities and learning to play together. They are well supported in their play and learning. Led by the Senior Practitioner and the wider school leadership practitioners have engaged well in professional learning opportunities. ECC staff note that they made effective use of time to work together and communicate more effectively. This is helping them to continue to improve the quality of engagement with children to better support children's learning and development. They feel more confident in their roles. Practitioners have developed their use of observation techniques to inform their planning and interaction with children. Staff and parents enjoy using the new learning journal approach which enhances opportunities to communicate and keep in touch with families regularly. Staff report that the roll out of enhanced provision to 1140 hours is having a positive impact on their capacity to meet children's needs and interests as they have more time together.

The school and ECC have made good progress in improving the curriculum across all stages. They have engaged with staff, children and parents to explore views and interests. The staff team now makes use of curricular frameworks that result in teachers planning more effectively so that children can build on their prior learning more effectively. They are making use of national and international research to inform developments. School leaders have identified the need to continue their work to ensure children experience a broad and relevant curriculum. They have plans in place to refresh the contexts for learning across the school and to continue to place the rich local environment at the centre of their curriculum.

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. East Ayrshire 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.

Susan Duff
HM Inspector