

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 Burnbrae Primary School and Nursery we said that we would engage with the school and nursery to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Burnbrae Primary School, including the complex needs (CN), and social and complex needs (SCN) provisions and the Nursery. 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 new headteacher, staff and local authority officer the school and setting'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**

Overall, staff across the school, provisions and nursery worked well to support one another, children and their families during lockdown. Practitioners in nursery have continued to build and deepen relationships with families. They helped support the phased return to nursery and those children moving to Primary 1 well. Parents speak highly of the staff in nursery for their efforts to keep in contact with families and provide support with young children's learning and development. These strong relationships have endured and deepened as the children have returned to face-to-face learning. Parents also found that they had a wealth of useful online information through the use of digital platforms. Learning and wellbeing was also fully supported and enhanced by personal, regular contact to provide advice and support. As a result, children within the nursery are making good progress.

Parents recognise and appreciate the efforts of staff to improve access to learning over the different periods of lockdown. They report the quality and regularity of lockdown experiences for children varied across the school. Parents welcome information coming from the school in the form of newsletters and other digital platforms. They welcome the strong partnerships with the nursery and would like this to continue when children move to primary school. The Parent Council is engaging well with the new headteacher. They feel informed and have confidence that much needed improvements have started. Parents also recognise school improvements will take more time given the size and complexity of the school. The Parent Council can be a good source of assistance to help involve the wider parent body, collect views and help inform school self-evaluation.

The senior leadership team have been flexible and agile to respond to ongoing challenges as a result of staff absence and changes to staff. Since August 2021, additional COVID-19 periods of absence and isolation have also impacted on the whole school community. This additional impact from the pandemic has made the pace of improvement slow since the beginning of the current session.

Digital skills and access to online learning improved during lockdown and staff recognise this as a positive change. The ongoing distribution of digital devices to support online learning has also helped to build confidence. It will be important to continue to build and develop these new skills in a systematic way as planned.

### **Progress with recommendations from previous inspection**

The new headteacher together with the senior leadership team have made a positive start to improve the ethos and culture within the school. They are eager for a more participative learning climate where everyone is valued. Staff have used approaches to support recovery as an opportunity to use the adversity of the pandemic as a catalyst for change. In response to the changing culture and the need for online learning, staff are now planning collaboratively and work together more regularly. Staff are now more willing to undertake aspects of improvement that will impact on their teaching and children's learning. Staff from across the school, nursery and the CN and SCN provisions are now involved in working groups to take forward school priorities. Staff are beginning to be given the flexibility and trust to work collegiately within agreed and supportive parameters. This can better enhance the experience and outcomes for all learners. Robust quality assurance approaches will help to strengthen this work as it moves forward.

Across the school children experience increasingly positive relationships with staff and peers. Children are calm and patient in class. They are eager to participate more fully in lessons and help the school improve. A few new committees are in the process of starting and children are eager to participate. It will be important that children see the process of selection as fair and equitable.

All children within the CN and SCN provisions now have positive handling plans and accompanying risk assessments which staff review regularly. As planned, senior leaders should now ensure that all staff in the CN and SCN provision are trained in safe handling. In addition, agreed approaches, personalised plans and risk assessments continue to be monitored regularly. Children have tailored plans and many have opportunities to join their peers for specific learning experiences. It is important these experiences are of a consistently high quality. Children and staff in the CN provision are rightly proud of the work they have taken forward in learning outdoors. Many children have achieved a John Muir Award as a result.

Staff are now committed to taking forward school improvements and have a clearer understanding of their role. They are keen to learn from one another through shared planning and team teaching models. The new headteacher and other senior leaders should encourage and continue to build on this collaborative working. This will help develop further a shared understanding of curriculum expectations of high quality learning and of support for teaching and assessment improvement across the school. It will be important that staff agree and develop approaches to monitor the impact of their work. The focus must continue to be on improving classroom practice to ensure children make the best possible progress in their learning. Shared high expectations of what children can achieve needs to be a consistent feature across the school.

### What happens next?

Understandably, both the school and nursery have been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school and nursery. Staff and practitioners are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff and practitioners have also been making some progress in taking forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection. We recognise that the school and nursery need more time to implement fully the priorities for improvement and to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will carry out another visit to the school and nursery within one year of the publication of this letter. When we carry out another visit, we will write to you informing you of the progress Burnbrae Primary School and Nursery has made.

Mary Ann Hagan  
HM Inspector