

25 January 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 Slamannan Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare Class (ELCC), 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 Slamannan Primary School and ELCC. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the 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, children and their families have demonstrated great resilience and perseverance during the past 18 months. The location of the school brought particular challenges during periods of remote learning, including travel to the in-school provision and issues with broadband connectivity. However, staff and families worked well together to overcome these challenges. During the second period of remote learning, the in-school provision was relocated to the school building. This provided much needed, and more accessible support for families who had been offered places. During periods of remote learning, staff created paper packs, fully resourced activity packs and had a flexible approach to online activities. The flexible approach to online learning ensured that all children and families were able to participate in learning at home. Staff were very creative in their approach to transition into P1. Online videos, creative use of social media and staffing across the early level have provided effective support for children and families as they moved from the early learning and childcare class to the school. Communication between the school and families has improved during periods of remote learning. The school plans to build on this further to involve families more regularly in their children's learning.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Staff from Falkirk Council have worked closely with the headteacher and staff since the last inspection. This support has helped the school to make progress with the recommendations from the previous inspection, particularly in the ELCC. Senior leaders need to continue to work with staff to gather evidence on the quality of learning and achievement across the school. This should support them to plan the next steps to help the school continue to improve.

The headteacher has continued to build positive relationships across the school community. The school is a calmer environment for learning. The new school motto 'your bright future starts here' reflects the commitment of all staff to ensure there are high expectations and aspirations for all children at Slamannan Primary School and ELCC.

In the ELCC, practitioners show a high level of respect for young children. They value their thoughts, feelings and wishes. Every child is treated and valued as a unique individual. In the primary classes, the recently refreshed 'relationships agreement' is supporting staff and children to talk about feelings and behaviours using a shared language. Senior leaders should continue to use this agreement with staff, children and families. This will help the whole school community understand the school's approaches to resolving difficulties and helping children to manage their feelings and emotions.

In the ELCC, practitioners have made significant improvements to the learning environment, including the outdoor space. Children enjoy making choices about their learning. In the primary classes, teachers are beginning to plan activities which encourage children to think for themselves. Teachers should continue to plan learning set at the right level of difficulty for groups and individuals in their class.

Staff are continuing to improve approaches to supporting children who require additional support with their learning. Additional funding is used to provide additional capacity, and staff are working well with groups of children to support their individual needs. Children who attend the enhanced provision benefit from the small group setting and nurturing approaches. Staff should continue to develop further their approaches to providing additional support to ensure that they are making a difference for children.

In the ELCC, practitioners make sure young children are making progress. In the primary classes, teachers are beginning to make effective use of approaches to check that children are making appropriate progress, and to identify children who may need help with their learning. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to make best use of the information staff are gathering to help children overcome any difficulties in their learning.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school and early learning and childcare class has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had an impact on the work of the school and ELCC. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have also been making progress in taking forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection. Whilst there has been good progress in addressing the areas for improvement in the ELCC, we recognise that the school needs more time to implement fully its priorities for improvement identified at the original inspection. We have asked Falkirk 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, Falkirk 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