

1 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 Coulhill Primary School and Nursery Class, 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 and virtual meetings in Coulhill Primary School and Nursery Class. 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**

Coulhill Primary School and Nursery Class has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. There have been a large number of staff absences and more recently, a large proportion of staff changes. The new headteacher joined the school around the start of the pandemic. Leading the school through two periods of remote learning, alongside the ongoing staff absences, has been challenging, however, she has done this well. The impact of the pandemic for some of the school community has been traumatic and has led to a number of health and wellbeing issues in the community.

The headteacher and staff began their journey to improvement at the beginning of the pandemic. They agreed an action plan and a school improvement plan to make changes leading to improvements. Due to all of the staffing challenges, and the staff changes especially in the nursery, senior leaders and staff have only managed to address a few of the plans. The headteacher and staff are now ready to move forward with improvements.

During the pandemic, support staff and early learning practitioners worked well with families and kept in touch with many on a daily basis. Staff are now ensuring helpful soft start approaches to classes that are supporting children to settle. Staff also focused on improving relationships with and amongst children and this is clearly beginning to have an impact on the behaviour of children. In classes, children are calm, settled and ready to learn.

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

The new headteacher is working sensitively with the school community in leading Coulhill Primary School and Nursery Class. She has made a good start to move the school and nursery class forward.

Staff worked together to identify the key areas of the school requiring improvement. They agreed that a first point of action would be to develop new school values and to build further positive relationships amongst children. As a result of this, a helpful set of values has been

devised. Children and parents should continue to be involved in embedding these values across the school community. Children can already talk about the improvements they are beginning to see in relationships with others.

Staff across the school and nursery are beginning to work more closely to plan approaches to teaching and learning. Almost all children are well behaved and are ready to learn. Classes in the school are calm. Staff in the school and nursery should continue to work together to agree what good learning looks like. They should focus on how to motivate and engage children and involve them in planning their learning. Teachers and practitioners need to challenge children more in classroom activities.

Staff have started to make plans to look more closely at how they support each child in their learning. This will help children in class to learn at the correct pace. Teachers and practitioners have also identified those children who require targeted supports. Some of these children now have a Child's Plan with targets for learning. Senior leaders should ensure that the views of parents and children are sought regularly and recorded in all Child's Plans. This will support staff to meet the individual needs of all children.

Children's attainment in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics is weak. A significant number of children across the school are not yet making sufficient progress. There is a lack of reliable information on children's overall progress and attainment. Nursery practitioners have worked to increase their understanding of activities which will support children to progress in literacy and numeracy. Practitioners now need to apply this learning on a daily basis. There is a need to provide all children with greater opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work and to learn in real life contexts. This will help them to apply what they learn in meaningful ways.

### 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 prioritising their plans to support recovery. As a result, the school and nursery need more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will also carry out another visit to the school 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 the school has made.

Ann Floyd  
HM Inspector