

18 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 Colinton 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 to the school and nursery. Our engagement helped us learn more about how well 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 officers 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**

Colinton Primary School and Nursery Class serves an area to the south west of Edinburgh City. The school population has remained static during the period of the pandemic. This has allowed staff to provide continuity for children during a challenging period. The school is inclusive and sensitive to the individual needs of children and their families. During periods of remote learning, staff worked together with parents to provide continuity and support. The school ensured all children had access to electronic devices and Wi-Fi at home. The staff team worked effectively as a 'hub' and supported one another in developing their technological knowledge and skills. They used themes and topics well to support children and families during home learning. Parents expressed their gratitude for the efforts staff made to support learning at home. Weekly assemblies continued throughout lockdown with a focus on celebrating successes and achievements.

Staff across the school and nursery are enthusiastic and support one another very well. The pastoral support from the acting headteacher is greatly appreciated and staff are motivated to provide positive learning experiences for children. The school harnessed the support of the community through setting up a stall at the local shop as a collection point for learning packages and supported families by delivering food parcels. More recently, and since the arrival of the acting headteacher, the school has begun to flourish. The acting headteacher and principal teacher are responsive to staff absences and provide teaching cover when necessary. This has allowed the acting headteacher to get to know children well and evaluate how well they are making progress. Overall, the school is improving outcomes for children and attainment shows early signs of improving. The acting headteacher and staff have devised a clear renewal plan with appropriate focus on learning, teaching and assessment. They also emphasise the importance of supporting children's health and wellbeing. Children are settled well in school. They feel included and know how to get help if they need it. Relationships between staff and children and amongst children are very positive.

## Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Overall, the school is making good progress in the key areas for improvement identified from the original inspection. The substantive headteacher initially led the school in its action plan to address these key areas. She was supported well by the education authority and is currently seconded to another school. The resulting acting headteacher post was appointed to Colinton Primary School and Nursery Class 11 months ago. The acting headteacher is effective in her role and leads the school with refreshed vigour. She has devised a clear renewal plan with staff and has an appropriate focus on the quality of children's experiences and their wellbeing. Teachers are developing cooperative learning approaches and children are taking greater responsibility for their own learning. Children talk about their learning with increasing confidence. The teaching team has a range of strengths and expertise and enjoy supporting one another. They continue to work towards implementing teaching approaches consistently across all stages. In the nursery class, practitioners have made good progress to enhance their practice and across the school make very good use of outdoor spaces. Practitioners encourage children to be creative and curious. Children are growing in confidence and demonstrate independence and resilience in the outdoor spaces. As planned, staff should work together to develop the approach to play based learning in the nursery and into the early primary stages.

The acting headteacher provides strong leadership in teamwork, builds positive relationships and demonstrates clearly her commitment to the school's vision and values. She fosters confidence in the individual strengths of staff and encourages shared leadership very effectively. She fulfils the role as acting headteacher sensitively and is ambitious for children. Her development of the support for learning (SfL) role and overview of additional support needs is a strength. This provides a leadership opportunity for the SfL teacher who provides very effective support for staff, children and families. Already, children's achievements are growing and attainment is beginning to rise. The nursery team has made good progress in developing self-evaluation, which is now a regular feature of their work. They are aware of the wider priorities of the school, how their work contributes to these and have a clear focus on improvement.

Staff increasingly involve children in evaluating the work of the school. Children's views and ideas are heard through their involvement in several groups. They would like to solve a problem of litter by having more bins and litter pickers. They plan to take this forward through the eco group and pupil council. Prefects are proud to wear their badges and know they have a responsible role to model approaches to supporting others. Children talk about their learning enthusiastically and describe their successes. They know how to ask for help if they need it and can take decisions about challenge in their learning. Good progress has been made in the nursery to enable children to take greater responsibility for their learning. Children now have more of a voice in influencing the work of the school and nursery setting. The recently introduced area for play and exploration between nursery children and those in P1, provides a stimulating environment which promotes creativity and problem-solving. Children are active participants in their play and becoming increasingly independent in the indoor environment. The acting headteacher and staff across the school and nursery, should take forward their plans to continue building on the use of target setting and feedback to children about their learning.

### 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. They have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with the original inspection. The City of Edinburgh 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 Gow  
HM Inspector