

31 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Dalrymple Primary School and Early Childhood Centre. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement, which we agreed with the school and East Ayrshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. This visit focused on the Early Childhood Centre (ECC). During our visit, we observed and talked to children, and worked closely with the headteacher and practitioners. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the ECC has taken to improve. We looked at the particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the centre has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the ECC at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

Overall, the school has made some progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

Continue to develop effective strategic leadership and self-evaluation approaches in the Early Childhood Centre which lead to improved outcomes for all children.

Following the inspection, school leaders developed a detailed action plan outlining clear areas for development. Approaches to self-evaluation and monitoring have also been established. This is beginning to support practitioners to understand what is going well and what needs to improve. The team continues to work well together on improvement and change. They are very well supported by the Senior Early Learning and Childcare Practitioner (SELCP). Since her appointment in January 2019, she has taken time to monitor and evaluate children's experiences and has prioritised areas for improvement. She has gained the confidence of the team, and parents. Parents feel valued and welcome in the ECC. This is supporting an appropriate pace of change where the team are valued and included in the improvement process.

The team has made positive progress in their work to improve the ECC. To improve outcomes for children further, there remains the need for ongoing support and leadership from senior school leaders and the local authority. To support coherence and progression in children's learning, the ECC team should work more closely with school staff across the early level.

Continue to engage children and staff across the ECC in improving the consistency of learning, interactions and assessment, whilst ensuring an appropriate challenge.

Practitioners provide a nurturing and welcoming learning environment. There are nurturing relationships with children and their families. Parents feel able to approach practitioners, ask advice and access support. There is now a clearer focus, and shared understanding, on agreed approaches to improving the playrooms, the resources available indoors and out, and how these impact on children's learning. Practitioners should continue to develop their approaches to ensuring high quality interactions with children. The SELCP has introduced and adapted approaches to record children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and

wellbeing. Practitioners welcome this more streamlined and consistent approach and are beginning to use this to inform their planning of children's experiences. Overall, practitioners would benefit from a deeper understanding of a more holistic approach to planning and assessing children's learning, wellbeing and progress. There is a need for more effective information gathering to support planning next steps for individual children. ECC practitioners engage in whole school professional learning on effective learning and teaching. They would also benefit from more bespoke support dedicated to enhancing younger children's learning, including a deeper understanding of children's development.

Continue to develop a curriculum across the school that is relevant to the context and supports children to make progress and develop appropriate knowledge and skills.

While the school has made some progress in this area. It continues to be an area for improvement across the ECC and primary stages. The headteacher should ensure that the ECC is an integral feature of the school. It is important that the ECC features in whole school documentation and policies, including the curriculum rationale. Practitioners would benefit from professional learning to become more skilled and knowledgeable about Curriculum for Excellence.

Practitioners continue to develop exciting and relevant contexts for learning. Recent opportunities to explore local woodland are enhancing children's learning. Practitioners should continue with their plans to ensure this becomes an integral feature of children's outdoor learning. To maximise the potential of outdoor learning, and ensure progression in children's knowledge and skills, all staff should make use of national guidance in this area. In developing the wider curriculum, practitioners should take steps to plan opportunities for children to develop creativity, curiosity and enquiry.

What happens next?

The setting has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within 12 months of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include an inspector joining local authority officers on a shared monitoring and evaluation visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the setting has made and outlining any further action, agreed with East Ayrshire Council that we intend to take.

Susan Duff
HM Inspector