

30 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2020, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Whalsay School and Nursery Class. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- Senior leaders' positive influence as role models, exemplifying good practice and improving the curriculum in the primary and secondary departments.
- Children and young people who are keen to learn, courteous and well behaved, and who demonstrate a strong sense of pride and identity in their school and community.
- Features of high-quality learning and teaching, such as the well-differentiated learning activities at the primary stages, which ensure children make good progress. There is effective support for children and young people.
- The close collaboration with wider partners and the island community, enhancing young people's experiences and outcomes. Positive examples include the community's work with the school to maintain the island's culture, traditions and heritage in, for example, music and craft.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Shetland Islands Council.

- Continue to refine the clarity of the vision, values and aims as the foundations of the school's work. Senior leaders and staff should increasingly work across the different stages of the school.
- Increase the pace of improvements to the curriculum and consistency in high-quality learning and teaching.
- Improve the use of self-evaluation across the school, particularly in the nursery department, as a basis for improvement planning, ensuring that priorities are identified which enhance outcomes for all children and young people.
- In the nursery, develop approaches to planning, observing and assessing children's learning. Senior leaders should work with practitioners to ensure children make the best progress of which they are capable, and which will enable them to lead and talk about their own learning.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using four quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#) and [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#) Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Whalsay School and Nursery Class

Quality indicators for the school stages	Evaluation
Leadership of change	good
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Raising attainment and achievement	good
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	good
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale	

Quality indicators for the nursery class	Evaluation
Leadership of change	weak
Learning, teaching and assessment	weak
Securing children's progress	satisfactory
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	good
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our early learning and childcare? Appendix 1: The six-point scale	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

<https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/inspection-reports/reports-page/?id=5167>

What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings we identified areas where improvements are required. In light of the current circumstances, we will liaise with Shetland Islands Council to discuss our findings and support for the school. We will provide you with an update on next steps once the school has reopened.

Jacqueline Gallagher
HM Inspector