

14 December 2021

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 Freuchie Primary School and Nursery Class, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with children, staff, parents and the local authority and carried out a visit to the school. 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

The headteacher and staff are taking very positive steps to support children and their families through COVID-19. They made adaptations to the remote learning offer for the second lockdown and as a result, delivered a successful learning programme. Children's engagement during the second period of lockdown was very high. Staff are committed to supporting the emotional wellbeing of all children. They have established a range of successful strategies to support every individual child's wellbeing. Staff surveyed all pupils and families to understand their emotional and wellbeing needs before returning to school after the second lockdown. This enabled them to plan a range of bespoke supports to facilitate a smooth transition back to school. Once school buildings reopened, staff used flexible approaches to assessment well to identify gaps in learning and to assist them to plan appropriate next steps to address these. Parents told us how much they appreciate the care and support their children received from staff during this very challenging time. Commendably, the staff team also displayed a strong commitment to supporting each other during this time.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The school has made very good progress in taking forward all areas of improvement that were identified at the original inspection.

Significant changes to the staff team have taken place in the last 18 months. A new permanent headteacher was appointed in November 2020 and new members of staff have joined the nursery class and school. The headteacher is held in high regard across the school community. Children, staff and parents share the very positive impact the new headteacher is having in Freuchie Primary School and Nursery Class. The headteacher and staff are benefitting from the support and positive encouragement the school has received from the local authority.

The new headteacher has introduced very robust approaches to help identify the school's key strengths and specific areas requiring improvement. She and her staff team have made very good use of the newly refreshed vision, values and aims to provide a clear context for school improvement. The headteacher's relentless focus on improvement is helping to drive forward significant developments across the nursery class and school.

Across the school, there is now a calm and purposeful ethos which is leading to improved learning and more positive relationships. Staff are kind in their interactions with children and are very sensitive to the needs of each as an individual. The school has made positive changes to safeguarding arrangements and children report that they feel safe and happy in their school. Parents told us that they are confident that their children are well supported and cared for in the school.

Practitioners and staff are leading new developments linked to the school's key improvement priorities. They are able to talk about the impact of these, for example, how new approaches to teaching writing are supporting children to write more imaginatively. In the nursery class, practitioners have skilfully supported children to improve their learning environment. Across the school, children, staff and parents are justly proud of the improvements they are making. There is a great sense of energy and enthusiasm as they work together to continue to improve their school.

Staff have undertaken significant work to develop the curriculum since the original inspection. Processes are in place to ensure children are involved in developing what and how they want to learn. Staff now track coverage of the broad general curriculum as the children move through the school. As planned, staff should now develop clear, skills-based progression frameworks for science and social studies. This will better support staff to plan and monitor how well children are building on their knowledge and skills as they move through the school.

Children in the nursery class are making good progress in their learning. They are developing their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts. For example, they make marks to select their preferred lunch choice. Practitioners in the nursery class are now identifying and setting next steps in learning for all children. Positively, children are also encouraged to create their own next steps in learning.

The headteacher and staff acknowledge raising attainment across the school as an ongoing, key priority. Areas of work already undertaken by staff are beginning to have a positive impact on children's progress. The headteacher and staff meet regularly to ensure that children's progress is carefully monitored and timely interventions are put in place to support next steps in learning. Children who require additional support with their learning have appropriate plans in place to help them make the best possible progress.

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. Staff have addressed the areas for development from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Fife 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.

Jackie Maley
HM Inspector