

22 September 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bearsden Primary School
East Dunbartonshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including planning and monitoring children's learning, assessment and how well children's learning needs are met. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across all stages in the school, most children have a positive learning experience. Almost all children are eager to learn and report that the school is helping them to become confident learners. In problem-solving and numeracy activities across the school, children benefit from tasks that challenge them to achieve success when working in small groups. We have asked teachers to make more use of these helpful approaches in all areas of the curriculum and increase the opportunities for children to work together in groups more regularly. Overall, children's learning experiences require to be of a more consistently high quality across the school. The majority of teachers share what they want children to learn but need to provide more feedback on what children have achieved and their next steps in learning. Staff should talk to children more regularly about how they can improve their learning. We have asked the school to improve how well children are involved in setting targets and taking responsibility for their own learning. By P7, children are beginning to evaluate their own learning effectively. For example, at the end of mathematics lessons they can identify what the next steps in their learning will be.

Children are developing as citizens and are aware of the needs of others through fundraising for charities locally and internationally. The school has raised children's awareness of environmental issues through gaining five Eco-Schools Scotland green flags. Across all stages, children take responsibilities for recycling. A few children take leadership roles as house captains and serve on the pupil council. There is significant scope to give children a greater say in the work of the school, and to provide them with more varied responsibilities and leadership roles. The achievement of all children should be higher. Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in developing literacy skills. In almost all lessons, children listen attentively and respond well to teachers' questions. They use their reading skills effectively to carry out tasks

and follow written instructions. At P1, almost all children can write independently and express their feelings and ideas. Across the school, children write for a range of purposes but the quality of children's writing is not yet high enough. We have asked staff to provide more consistent feedback for children on how to improve their writing to ensure they attain as highly as possible. At almost all stages, children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. The headteacher and staff have focused on improving this area of the curriculum and we are pleased with the good progress that children in P1 are making. Across the stages, most children are developing their understanding of solving mathematical problems and thinking of ways to approach numerical challenges. They are especially enthused by the use of computer games and puzzles to develop their mathematical skills and language. However, children require to develop more secure knowledge and skills in numeracy and mathematics, including mental calculations. The school should evaluate children's progress more effectively and raise attainment in numeracy and mathematics. Across a range of stages, children are making good progress in science. For example, children in P3 make good use of the internet to research facts about frogs, children in P5 can name and locate the major organs of the body, and by P7, children can predict, investigate and report the outcomes of an experiment on the properties of materials. Children are developing an understanding of the need for active lifestyles. Too few children understand the importance of making healthy food choices. At all stages, children should have a better understanding and broader experience of health and wellbeing.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

The school's approaches to meeting the needs of all children are satisfactory. In a few effective lessons, activities matched the learning needs of children well and were sufficiently challenging. We have asked staff to increase the pace and challenge for the highest-attaining children to ensure they make better progress. Currently the school is developing systems and processes to monitor and track children's progress. Staff are working together to make better use of assessment to inform the planning of children's learning to ensure they all achieve as highly as possible. Pupils requiring additional support in their learning are monitored closely and their needs are identified promptly. Their progress is shared at regular review meetings involving parents and partner agencies and records updated systematically. The next steps in learning should be made clearer for these individual children to ensure they know what they are expected to achieve. The school should now ensure that all children understand what they are expected to achieve through personal learning targets and that it keeps all parents informed of ways in which they can support their children's learning. Support staff work well alongside teachers in classes to provide targeted support for groups and individuals. The network support teacher is effective in her role and is a model of good practice in her teaching. The staff should ensure children's views are sought and that bullying is dealt with more effectively. We have asked the school to improve relationships amongst pupils and ensure all staff are approachable and effective in resolving concerns raised by children. The school works closely with the supportive Parent Council and should now involve parents more in supporting their children's learning. The school plans to improve its methods of assessment and reporting to help parents have a better understanding of how well children are progressing.

Staff are at a very early stage of developing a common understanding of Curriculum for Excellence. They do not have a consistent and shared understanding of what they

are trying to achieve for children through the curriculum. Progress in developing the school's curriculum has been too slow. The school should ensure all children have opportunities to make appropriate progress in all aspects of the curriculum. Staff should continue to improve their professional knowledge and understanding of standards and raise their expectation of what children can achieve. They have introduced a variety of new materials for developing children's skills in numeracy and mathematics and new approaches for science. As a result, children's experiences are improving in these areas. Staff are developing children's thinking skills and should now ensure children have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in a wider variety of contexts. Teachers of P1 classes need to work more closely with staff in early learning and childcare centres so that children build on what they already know when they start at primary school. Children in P7 and their parents benefit from the support provided at the time children move on to S1. The headteacher plans to further strengthen partnership working with Bearsden Academy and its associated primary schools to support further development of the curriculum.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher and East Dunbartonshire Council have identified the need to strengthen the school's approaches to improvement through self-evaluation. The school is currently prioritising improvements to its approaches to assessment, tracking of children's progress and moderation of standards. However, much work remains to be done to ensure improvements are made in all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher and depute headteachers are considering ways to ensure they work as effectively as possible in their roles as senior leaders and to take shared responsibility for leading the school's improvement priorities. We have asked them to ensure attainment is raised, that children make more appropriate progress and that the quality of learning and teaching is improved consistently across the school. The important weaknesses in the school's curriculum development should be addressed as a matter of the highest priority. Almost all parents tell us they are happy with the school and that it is well led. This satisfaction is attributed to the appointment of the headteacher earlier this session. He has already taken steps to involve staff and parents more in evaluating the school's work and identifying areas for improvement. He has gained the respect of almost all parents, and the majority of staff say they are now actively involved in setting the priorities for the school. The headteacher now needs to work with all members of the school community to develop a vision for the school and a shared understanding of what it is trying to achieve for children through Curriculum for Excellence. With the support of East Dunbartonshire Council, and yourselves as partners, Bearsden Primary School has the capacity to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The polite and articulate children who are motivated to learn.
- The readiness of staff to take forward new initiatives and improve the work of the school.
- The positive start made by the headteacher in gaining the confidence of parents and support of staff.
- The supportive parents and their willingness to be more involved in their children's learning.

We discussed with staff and East Dunbartonshire Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve the curriculum.
- Ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences for children across the school, and that the learning needs of all children are met.
- Improve the school's approaches to self-evaluation, to ensure they lead consistently to improvements in children's experiences and attainment.
- Continue to improve approaches to assessment and tracking children's progress to ensure that children's attainment improves.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that Bearsden Primary School needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with East Dunbartonshire Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within twelve months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/BearsdenPrimarySchoolEastDunbartonshire.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.