

27 November 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

**Milnathort Primary School and Nursery Class
Perth and Kinross 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 children's involvement in the life of the school, aspects of self-evaluation and celebrating achievement. 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 the school and nursery, children learn and achieve very well. In the nursery class, almost all children are engaged and interested in their chosen activities. They are motivated and are building confidence as they share their learning with others. For example, parents were invited into the nursery for a successful baking session and 'Boogie Fit' event. Children are becoming more involved in their learning as they initiate, plan and develop their ideas of what they want to find out. In the primary classes, children are active in their learning. Almost all work very well together as a class and in small groups. Children are involved in planning and evaluating aspects of their own learning. In almost all classes, children engage well with 'learning walls' which help them understand what they are learning and how to improve. Children are able to influence the work of the school. All children are involved in responsibility groups including, for example, the International and the 'Front of House' groups. Commendably, children have raised a considerable amount of money for charity. They have developed a positive international awareness through their links with Top Ride Academy in Kenya. The achievements of children are celebrated very well through, for example, the school's 'Achievement Alley' and at assemblies.

In the nursery, almost all children listen attentively during group times and for simple instructions. Most are developing their early writing skills as they take 'notes' and 'write' captions and stories. Across the primary classes, almost all children are making very good progress in reading and most in writing. At the upper stages, they prepared and took part in a debate about Scottish independence. Across the school, children are developing well as readers and read regularly for enjoyment. At P7,

children worked well together in groups to research specific health conditions such as asthma to make information posters. Across the school, children write well in a range of contexts and would benefit from writing more often for an increased range of purposes. Most children are confident in number work and by the upper stages are accurate in their mental and written calculation. In solving mathematical problems, most are able to explain how they reached their answers. Children are confident in using information and communications technology to support their learning in mathematics including using software to create graphs, and, by P7, calculate time, distance and speed. Staff should now ensure that the presentation of children's work is of a consistently high standard. Children achieve well in the expressive arts and enjoy participating in music, dance and art. They are successful in a range of sporting activities, such as rugby and football. The school has achieved 'bird-friendly' status and, at the early years, children are becoming confident in identifying birds through their 'Robbie Robin' theme.

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

Staff know children well and provide a high level of pastoral care and support. In most lessons, tasks and activities are set at an appropriate level of difficulty for children. However, in a few cases, the pace of lessons could be increased to create more challenge for all children. The support for learning teacher and support assistants work closely with the headteacher to provide targeted support for identified individuals and groups. Across the school and nursery, staff assess children's learning in a range of ways. They should now collate this information better to track children's progress more effectively from stage to stage. In the nursery and primary classes, staff provide children with a suitably broad curriculum. The curriculum has important strengths and is improving as staff use guidance relating to Curriculum for Excellence with increasing confidence. Staff make meaningful links across children's learning. They should now continue with their plans to develop the curriculum further. Children have access to a number of out-of-class activities such as a gardening club. A range of visiting specialist teachers support children's learning successfully in the primary classes. Transitions into P1 and into secondary school are supportive. Young people from Kinross High School support children with activities such as sport. Staff should continue with plans to improve further, links between the nursery and P1.

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

The headteacher provides effective leadership and has been successful in leading the staff team in improving children's learning experiences. She is well supported by staff and parents. As a result, there is an extremely positive ethos for learning in the school which supports children's learning very well. The school uses the views of children and parents well to inform school improvements. The headteacher has put in place a number of strategies to monitor the work of the school which through time will become fully embedded and have even more impact. These include learning visits to classes, monitoring teachers' forward plans and 'learning lunches' with children. All of this is having a positive impact on the work of the school. The headteacher, supported by the depute headteacher, should now extend these approaches to include tracking more fully all areas of children's learning. With the

reflective teamwork of staff, and the continuation of planned developments as outlined in the school improvement plan, the school is well-placed to keep improving.

This inspection of your school and nursery class found the following key strengths.

- Confident children who make a significant contribution to the life of the school.
- Children's learning experiences across the school and nursery.
- The supportive ethos for learning.
- Teamwork of a reflective staff.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to develop the curriculum.
- Ensure that pace and challenge of learning are matched consistently well to the needs of all children.
- Continue to develop procedures to track children's attainment and progress.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The local authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

Alan Urquhart
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/MilnathortPrimarySchoolPerthandKinross.asp>.

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