

27 October 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**West Linton Primary School and Nursery Class
Scottish Borders Council**

In August 2014, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well children are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

At the primary stages and in the nursery class almost all children have positive learning experiences. Children in the nursery class talk together confidently and are enjoying learning about pirates. They are developing skills of independence and make choices about what they want to learn through a wide range of play materials and activities on offer. Most children are purposefully engaged with play activities both indoors and outdoors. We are pleased that the newly established nursery staff team are working effectively with the principal teacher and reviewing profiles of children's development and learning at the early level. We have asked staff to share the profiles with children, as planned and help children know what they are achieving. At the primary stages, almost all children are engaged well in their learning and tell us that they enjoy learning at school. They are developing skills for learning through becoming increasingly reflective about the ways in which they learn. They can evaluate how well they are achieving and are expected to think about how they can continue to improve. This is particularly effective in numeracy lessons where expectations are high, the pace of learning is brisk and children are benefiting from working collaboratively in small groups. Overall, children are motivated and actively involved in their learning. Teaching approaches have greatly improved and children are clear about what they are learning and when they have been successful. We have asked staff to continue to further develop the use of learning logs and identify next steps for learners. The school celebrates achievements and shares success through the effective use of digital media. Twitter is growing in its popularity as a means of recognising achievement. Almost all children take part in out-of-class activities and school clubs. They are benefiting from a wide and growing range of clubs supported by staff and parents.

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, the school can demonstrate children are now making better progress across the Curriculum for Excellence levels. Very good links have been made between the nursery class and P1 to build on children's prior learning. However, the pace and challenge of learning within the nursery class needs to be further improved to ensure children are progressing well at the early level of the curriculum. Across the school, the pace of learning and level of challenge have improved which has led to better progress in literacy and numeracy. The school is using a range of assessment information to measure progress of individual children and groups and should use this to ensure all children are progressing appropriately over time. The rigour of professional discussions and tracking of children's progress is greatly improved. However, the school needs more time to track, monitor and assess children's attainment to measure the impact of its high quality learning environment. We are pleased with the progression in children's writing skills and mental agility in numeracy and problem solving. By P7 children can write at length and a few aspire to writing a novel together. At P4, children enjoy reading for pleasure and talk enthusiastically about novels they are reading. All children would benefit from the school library being used more regularly to further encourage reading for pleasure. The school has introduced opportunities for children to develop leadership skills through pupil voice representatives and enquiry groups linked to the school improvement plan.

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

Staff now place a clear emphasis on setting higher expectations for children's learning. They have improved their approaches to planning learning and are developing a shared understanding of what they want children to achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. They have successfully reviewed the assessment of writing and introduced a new maths programme to develop pace and challenge. Greater depth and relevance to learning is being developed through improved grouping of the experiences and outcomes across the curriculum. We are pleased to see that parents have been involved in developing the curriculum and the helpful overviews that have been shared. We have asked the school to develop its rationale for the curriculum and to share this with parents and partners. Staff are now more confident about the skills they want children to develop and the ways in which these can be built upon. The nursery staff team should continue to plan for challenging learning activities to meet the needs of all children and ensure parents are fully involved and informed of the progress their children are making. The school is strengthening its approaches to meeting the needs of all learners and has raised expectations for children. The improved focus on tracking attainment and systems to identify and support children with additional needs informs learning groups and targets support appropriately for those who need it. This now needs to be monitored rigorously to ensure positive impact in meeting the needs of all learners.

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

The school has raised expectations in many aspects of its work. The new headteacher has had a very positive impact on the work of the school. She has quickly gained the confidence and respect of staff and most parents. Staff appreciate the guidance and support of the headteacher. She has successfully supported and challenged staff to bring about improved learning experiences for

your children. The appropriate focus on improving communications and creating a welcoming ethos has contributed to parents and the wider community becoming more involved in the life of the school. Your children are benefiting from the vibrant learning environment that has been developed by all. Almost all parents say that, overall, they are happy with the school. The commitment of staff and the collaborative leadership of the headteacher has resulted in the school now having a clear and shared vision and aims founded on high expectations for children. The school is developing effective approaches to self-evaluation and staff are making robust evaluations of their own practice. The school improvement plan is appropriate and well judged. The pace of change has increased and new developments are beginning to show a positive impact. With the continued support from Scottish Borders Council and increased involvement of yourselves as parents and carers, the capacity of West Linton Primary School and Nursery Class is high.

What happens next?

The recent appointment of the headteacher, recently appointed principal teacher and the entirely new team in the nursery means that at the time of this return inspection visit it is too early to measure the full impact of these positive staff changes. The school needs more time to further raise attainment and implement its improvement priorities.

As a result, our Area Lead Officer will work with Scottish Borders Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to make an extended visit with the local authority and report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

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