

13 January 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Kirkliston Primary School and Nursery Class  
The City of Edinburgh 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 aspects of self-evaluation, strategies to help children know themselves as learners and technologies. 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 nursery and school, children learn and achieve exceptionally well. There is a very positive and purposeful ethos of learning. In the nursery, there is a clear sense of community with children playing and learning together. Children are highly motivated and engaged in their activities and show a positive attitude and keen interest in their learning. They are independent learners and support each other very well. Children are consulted over many aspects of their nursery experience and have a clear influence over the direction their learning takes. For example, children have created plans about what they want in the new nursery garden. Children talk about their own learning confidently through, for example, 'Cosy Conversations'. Staff should continue with their plans to develop these further using tablet devices. In the primary classes, children also engage very well with their learning. They work very well individually, together in small groups and as whole classes. They carry out tasks and activities very responsibly. At all stages, children are involved in planning and evaluating aspects of their learning. Children know themselves very well as learners. They do this through 'Teacher Talk Time' which is embedded in the school and commented upon positively by parents. Staff should continue with plans to develop this even further and ensure a greater consistency across all classes. Children are able to influence the work of the school through, for example, buddying, the pupil council, acting as library monitors, and notably through the house system. They are also involved in developing health and sustainability across the school through, for example, monitoring the amount of waste paper around the school. Children are motivated to do their best through a range of school initiatives to celebrate their achievements such as the 'Star Awards'. They organise and support events to raise money for local charities which have a close link to the school. Children engage very well with their local community through, for example, performing at Kirkland Park Care

in the Community. They achieve well in a broad range of activities and clubs at lunchtimes and after school. In sport, children take part in local festivals along with other schools as individual participants and team members. Children enjoy performing in drama productions and are developing an appreciation of art. They do this very well through, for example, working with partners such as the Lyceum Theatre Company.

In the nursery, children are making very good progress in early literacy and numeracy. Children listen very well during group times such as listening to instructions to follow tasks correctly. Almost all children are developing a range of interesting vocabulary which they can use in a variety of relevant contexts such as discussing ingredients when baking. They are developing and applying their skills across routines and playroom activities, for example registering for their turn on the computer and creating snack menus. Children are developing their skills in early numeracy very well across their learning. For example, they count well in table top games, record the outside temperature daily and use the properties of shape to help them build models and structures. At the primary stages, children are developing their skills in English language and mathematics very well. They display very good skills when listening and talk confidently, asking relevant questions in response to others in order to extend their understanding. In all classes, almost all children enjoy reading and make purposeful use of the library in the school. Across the school, most children write well for different audiences and purposes. In P7, children are developing very good skills in note taking to support their writing about World War I. Children work together very well to share personal experiences and evaluate each other's imaginative stories. In numeracy, children's progress is excellent. Children are very confident and almost all are accurate in mental and written calculation appropriate to their stage of development. At P1, children are making very good progress with early numbers. They are able to use these skills purposefully in practical situations. At the upper stages, children are able to apply strategies to solve challenging mathematical problems successfully. Children achieve well in expressive arts with children's skills in music developing effectively through, for example, the school choir. At P4, children have produced interesting acrylic paintings based on the style of Kandinsky. In social studies, children are developing effectively as researchers using a range of sources, for projects with which they are engaged.

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

Across the nursery and school, staff support children extremely well. This has created a very inclusive ethos with pastoral care being of a very high quality. In the nursery, the ways in which staff meet children's needs is excellent. The deputy headteacher and principal teacher work well with all staff to plan stimulating and relevant activities which consistently meet children's needs and interests both indoors and in the very well-developed outdoor area. They are clear about children's next steps in learning which ensures that children are continually challenged in their learning. At the primary stages, tasks and activities in classes meet the needs of almost all children appropriately. Staff are aware that, at times, they need to provide more challenge for particularly higher achieving children. Staff track children's progress effectively and with rigour. Children requiring additional help with their learning are supported very well. Their needs are identified early and relevant individual plans put in place. The school ensures that parents are fully involved in this planning process. Support staff all make a very valuable contribution in helping how children learn. This is all

coordinated extremely well and is a very strong feature of the school and nursery. Parents are recognised as valuable partners in children's learning. This is evident across many aspects of the work of the school and nursery including the approach to family learning in the nursery. Communication between the Parent Council (Kirkliston Primary School Association), the school and parents is exemplary. Staff provide a curriculum which is appropriately broad and balanced and firmly based on what is relevant for children. In the nursery and school, staff are using national guidance with confidence. Whilst there are major strengths in the curriculum, staff are aware that they now need to continue to refine the curriculum. A particular focus should be given in ensuring a whole-school consistency in activities that make meaningful links across children's learning. Very effective arrangements are in place to ensure that transitions are smooth for nursery children moving to primary school. These include, for example, older children making a DVD about 'A Day in the Life of a P1'. Supportive arrangements are also in place for children in P7 moving on to Queensferry High School.

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

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership to the school. She is very well regarded in the school community and provides a clear direction for the school. She is very ably supported by the school's senior management team who carry out their roles effectively and in the headteacher's absence. They have worked with the very committed and reflective staff team to promote an exceptionally caring ethos with a clear focus on learning and school improvement. Leadership at all levels is clear and vibrant with, for example, staff taking on responsibility as curriculum leaders. The school community has developed very well-organised approaches to monitoring and evaluating its work. These include continually reviewing learning and teaching, seeking the views of children and parents and providing regular updates on improvements made. Commendably, this is all summarised in an annual review of quality assurance. As a result, approaches to self-evaluation are excellent. Building on the very effective leadership, the teamwork of all staff and the valuable support from parents, the school is in a very strong position indeed to secure continuous improvement.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- High-level of support for children and families in the nursery.
- Enthusiastic and motivated children who are proud of their school.
- Commitment of all staff to the continuous improvement of the school and nursery.
- Involvement of parents and the wider community in children's learning.
- Teamwork of all staff, led by the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, in providing a highly-supportive ethos for learning, high-quality pastoral care and a relevant curriculum.

We discussed with staff and The City of Edinburgh Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to use the rigorous self-evaluation now established, as a driver for continuous improvements.

## **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 evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We shall work with the school and The City of Edinburgh Council to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

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/KirklistonPrimarySchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

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