

2 September 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Clermiston 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 how well children are progressing in their numeracy skills and their participation in the life and work of the school. We also looked at the school's revised approach to planning the curriculum at the primary stages. 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?**

Children in the nursery class are learning and achieving well. Across the primary stages, children are capable of achieving more. In the nursery class, children are happy and settled, and familiar with the daily routines. Most play well in small groups, developing their skills in taking turns and sharing toys. They are independent, for example when serving themselves snacks. Children enjoy playing imaginatively on the outdoor 'train' planning trips or when joining in with singing games. There is scope to involve children more in planning and recording their learning. At the primary stages, most children enjoy school where they feel safe and well cared for. Most are well behaved and keen to learn, particularly when given challenging tasks and stimulating activities. Teachers increasingly plan lessons which engage children more actively in their learning. In some lessons, children benefit from engaging in high-quality discussion, creative thinking and leading their learning. Teachers are working together to ensure that this is a more consistent and regular experience in all lessons across the school. Almost all children settle quickly to tasks and work well together in pairs and groups. They have begun to evaluate their learning but, overall, are not clear enough about their learning targets or how to improve. Across the school, children are actively involved and achieve success in a range of sporting, cultural, and community events such as the 'Curtains Up' school show. Children can readily identify valuable life skills such as self-reliance and teamwork as a result of their experiences. They enhance their citizenship and leadership skills through participation in the pupil council, eco committee and fund-raising activities. Older children express themselves well and demonstrate the ability to take the initiative and lead in their roles as house captains and buddies for younger children.

At the nursery stage, most children listen well to stories and engage well in conversations with adults and other children. The majority can express ideas and opinions with confidence. Children enjoy hearing stories and looking at books. They are developing an awareness of letter names and sounds and the link between the written and spoken word. Most older children can recognise their name in print and a few are using story books independently. Children's knowledge of early number is progressing well and most can sort, sequence and match items according to size, shape and colour. At the primary stages, children, including those with additional support needs, are making satisfactory progress in English language and mathematics. Most children listen attentively to their teacher and to each other. They are able to share their views and engage in debate about a range of topics. However, they need to develop their skills in building on others' contributions, asking searching questions and sustaining their discussions. The majority of children read fluently and with expression. Children told us that they would like to improve the range of texts available to increase their motivation and interest in reading. They write for a variety of purposes and audience but could be encouraged to take more care in presentation and to write at greater length more often. In mathematics, children could be making better progress from prior levels of attainment. At the early stages, children are developing their numeracy skills well through regular opportunities to apply their learning in real-life contexts. From P3 to P6, children's skills in mental and written calculations need to be improved. By P7, children are able to calculate the area of simple two-dimensional shapes and are able to solve simple algebraic equations. Children at all stages are not always confident in identifying and using a range of strategies to solve mathematical problems. Across the school, children understand the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

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

In the nursery and primary classes, almost all staff provide a welcoming, supportive and caring learning environment for children. In the nursery, staff are beginning to plan activities to take more account of children's interests and learning needs. Children would benefit from a wider range of activities which develop their independence and extend their learning. At the primary stages, teachers provide a range of tasks, activities and resources which are well-paced and at the right level of difficulty for the majority of children. We have asked teachers to improve the pace of lessons and use of teaching time to create more challenge for all children. There are teachers who are very skilful in planning stimulating and interesting tasks which meet the varying needs of children in their class. This good practice should be shared more widely across the school. In a few lessons, the choice of learning activities did not motivate or engage children, leading to misbehaviour. The support for learning teacher provides helpful guidance and advice to all staff to support children with additional learning needs. Staff need to ensure that learning targets within individual support plans for children with additional needs are clear, and that children are involved more fully in setting and reviewing their own targets, to ensure they achieve as highly as possible.

Across the school, staff are now taking more account of Curriculum for Excellence guidance to improve the range and quality of teaching programmes and learning experiences for children. They are working well with colleagues in neighbouring schools to develop the curriculum and share standards. As a result, children have

improving opportunities to learn actively and influence what they are learning about in their topic work. The curriculum is enriched through a variety of visits and visitors. Staff recognise the need to improve curriculum progression to ensure that children's learning builds more effectively on their prior knowledge and their interests. At the early stages, a more structured programme for numeracy ensures children make better progress. Children take part in two hours of good quality physical education each week. Currently, children are provided with a broad curriculum. The school needs to ensure children experience a more balanced programme of learning across all curriculum areas.

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

In his short time in post, the headteacher has gained the trust and respect of staff, parents and children. He has made a positive start in identifying the required actions to improve the school and established a more reflective and evaluative culture amongst staff. Teamwork and morale continue to grow, with staff now feeling empowered to influence change and make improvements. The recently-appointed deputy headteacher and principal teacher support the headteacher well and now need to provide more direct support and challenge for staff to drive forward improvement. The school has a suitable range of approaches to self-evaluation which are contributing to some improvements in children's experiences and achievements. Teachers are not yet using these approaches consistently across the school to ensure improvements for children. Across the nursery and the primary stages, staff are hardworking and caring. They want to improve children's learning experiences and develop children's skills. To achieve this, they need to develop their skills in evaluating their own work and using evidence to identify and address areas for improvement needed in children's learning and achievement. The school is at the early stages of monitoring and tracking children's progress effectively. Your children would like more of a say in how to improve their learning and contribute to decision-making about their school.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection of the nursery, the school had no requirements and three recommendations which have been partially addressed. Outstanding issues relating to these recommendations are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there are two requirements and four recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Polite, friendly children who are eager to learn.
- Staff teamwork and commitment to improving the quality of children's experiences and achievements.
- The positive start made by the headteacher in improving the work and ethos of the school.

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

- Continue to improve the quality of learning to meet the needs of children more effectively.

- Continue to develop and improve further the curriculum, taking full account of Curriculum for Excellence guidance.
- Develop consistent and rigorous approaches to self-evaluation, including monitoring and tracking children's progress to ensure they attain as highly as possible.

### **What happens at the end of the inspection?**

As a result of our inspection findings, we think that the school and nursery class need additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with the City of Edinburgh Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within one year of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school and nursery class has improved.

Fiona Robertson  
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/ClermistonPrimarySchoolEdinburghCity.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.

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