

22 March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Gateside Primary School
Fife Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleague 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 the school is developing children's talking and listening and their thinking skills. 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 learn and achieve well in your school. They are settled and valued. They respond well to the nurturing and supportive ethos of the school. Almost all work well in pairs and small groups or on their own when required. The school arranges learning flexibly, taking good advantage of its small size and scale. Children are comfortable working in different groups with any of the school team. They enjoy a stimulating and interesting learning environment where 'learning walls' provide good support for developing their awareness of helpful strategies and alternative approaches. This is helping to develop your children to become more independent and resilient learners and so more able to achieve well. Children are becoming more confident in talking about their learning and progress. We have discussed with school staff how this could be developed further. Children use their learning logs to write about what they are doing well and what they need to do to get even better. The school's plan to take further account of your views within the learning logs will support an accurate focus on what children can do. Children's wider achievements, which are noted and celebrated well, need to be incorporated into learning logs so you as parents can see progression in your children's learning over a broader range of achievement.

Children across the school are making good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy against national standards. There is headroom in both areas for a few children to be making further progress, notably in numeracy and mathematics. The school is taking forward new approaches to teaching and learning in mathematics which are beginning to build children's increased understanding and deeper learning in numeracy and mathematics. Children are developing well in being able to talk about their ideas for solving mathematical problems systematically. Children are improving their listening and talking skills well. The school has used debating 'Big Questions'

well as a way of building skills such as offering opinions and developing arguments. Children across the school are positive about reading as an enjoyable experience and this is influencing many to write well and at length in a variety of ways. Children are developing good lifelong habits in looking after their own health such as daily tooth brushing and developing positive attitudes towards eating fresh fruit through the Taste of Fresh Fruit (TOFF) initiative. They are learning well how to control their emotions and work out issues constructively using strategies learned in school.

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

Your children are well supported in school and are developing well. Relationships are strong. Most children experience realistic and appropriately challenging learning. The school is developing strategies to ensure that all children are fully engaged and motivated. Children with additional learning needs are supported well and the school makes effective use of the contribution of external partners to do so. You as parents have a range of opportunities to be involved in your children's learning and the life of the school. Teachers work well together using national guidance to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. They have achieved a great deal in a short period of time, under the headteacher's leadership of curriculum development. Outdoor learning has been given a new focus and children are gaining valuable experiences through planning and developing their school gardens and contributing to their community through litter picks in the nearby woods. The school should take forward its plans to work closely with parents to develop a way to make overnight outdoor residential experiences available to older children in the school. We have agreed with the headteacher that there is a need for further work to revise the school's vision, values and aims and to use this to develop a curriculum overview with everyone involved across the school community. There is also a need to review arrangements for teachers' planning to provide more frequent and better opportunities for interdisciplinary learning to ensure children connect their learning as they progress through the curriculum. Arrangements for transition into the school and for moving from the primary to high school are well established and effective.

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

The school has made strong progress under the effective leadership of the headteacher. She has motivated the school team well to work closely together to take the school forward. Staff are now taking more responsibility for leading on specific school priorities. There is now a better-informed and realistic shared view of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further based on evidence and data. The school needs to progress with its plans for closer tracking of children's progress across all curriculum areas as a key part of the evidence used. Children are taking an increasing role in improving their learning and their school. All children are members of the pupil council and have contributed to working well with the local garden centre to redevelop the school's outdoor environment. You as parents are regularly consulted through surveys and questionnaires. The school now needs to work closely with the Parent Council to encourage all of you to become more actively involved in the life of the school and contribute to school developments. The school is aware that although progress has been made in many areas, there are further priorities to take forward, notably developing the curriculum fully. Improvement will

require the whole school community under the headteacher's leadership working together to make it successful.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The caring and nurturing ethos of the school ensuring all children feel valued.
- The progress made so far with developing children's independence and resilience as learners.
- The teamwork of the staff and headteacher together in taking forward school improvements.
- The stimulating and motivating environment created within and around the school.

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

- Review together with all of the school community the school's vision, values and aims to assist in developing a curriculum overview.
- Continue to develop the tracking of children's progress in all curriculum areas to ensure each one achieves all they can.
- Continue to develop children's ability to talk about what they do well and what they need to do to improve further.

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. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Fife Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Alasdair Eadie
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/GateSidePrimarySchoolFife.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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