

26 August 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Hope Community School and Nursery Class
Orkney Islands 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 outdoor learning, personal learning plans and modern languages. 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?

Overall, your children learn and achieve well. Children in the nursery are keen to explore their environment and are developing independence, for example when they get dressed to play outdoors. Children at the primary stages are enthusiastic and motivated learners. They engage well with all activities and are developing citizenship skills through fund raising for local and national charities. Children are gaining relevant leadership skills through participating in the pupil council. This has been very successful in addressing issues about playtimes, making them more challenging and fun. Children are respectful and caring towards one another and have positive relationships with adults in the school who they view increasingly as partners in their learning experiences. In almost all lessons, teachers share with children what they are expected to learn. Staff need to provide consistently high-quality feedback which allows children to understand what they need to do to improve. A start has been made in P3/P4 to develop personal learning planning and early indications show that children value opportunities to talk about their progress and achievements with their teacher. Children work together well in class, including in pairs, groups and individually. They are proud of their school and will readily share their achievements with visitors. As members of the eco committee, children take a positive lead within the school. They are developing a social conscience and have high ambitions to 'save the planet' and promote sustainability as they work towards their first Eco-Schools Scotland green flag.

Children in the nursery are making appropriate progress in early language and mathematics. Most can recognise their name in print and a few are attempting to write it. Children are not yet developing their early writing skills well enough in all areas of the playroom and outdoors. A few children are developing an understanding of

volume and capacity through exploring different shapes and sizes of containers during water play and the properties of sand as they build a moat outside the 'hobbit house'. Children at the primary stages are making good progress in language and literacy, mathematics and numeracy. Most children read well with fluency and expression. By the upper stages, they have begun to read and analyse a wider range of texts. The whole-school approach to developing writing has been a very recent introduction and is already leading to improvements in the quality of children's written work. Children now need to be encouraged to produce high-quality writing across all curricular areas. During their trip to the beach, children in P1/P2 sorted a variety of shells according to shape and size including the rare 'peedie groatie buckies'. They showed a good understanding of the variety in their collection while confidently presenting these findings in bar graphs. Children at the primary stages are agile and confident in making mental calculations. They are actively encouraged and easily capable of explaining their thinking and the strategies used. Children in P3/P4 are able to work with simple fractions in a variety of ways. By P7, children are confident in understanding and explaining number sequences. Children use information and communication technology well to explore the concepts of area through using programmable toys and, at the upper stages, to complete animations and prepare PowerPoint presentations to share their learning. Children are developing awareness of the importance of exercise and making healthy lifestyle choices. Children are very positive about the instrumental and music lessons in school. They are proud of their achievements through the school orchestra and choirs that have been introduced this year.

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

All staff work very hard to provide a positive climate for learning. Relationships in the nursery are caring and supportive. Staff need to ensure children have frequent opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and their understanding of health and wellbeing through all their learning experiences. It is very important for all nursery children to have a personal plan in place to ensure their needs are met. Across the school, children experience a broad education based on Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers develop children's knowledge and skills well in specific areas of the curriculum through interdisciplinary learning approaches. Children at the primary stages have good opportunities for personal achievement through musical and sporting experiences. The curriculum is enhanced by visiting teachers, for example, to help deliver high-quality physical education as part of the current programme of two hours a week for every child. A range of effective partnerships with parents and the local community enrich children's learning, for example, links with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and local archaeologists. Parents are encouraged to share their talents with children and do this through school clubs and class activities, for example, participating in a workshop to learn how to hand spin wool that the children had dyed. Hobbies sessions involve parents and children well in sharing and developing new interests and skills. Whilst activities are well planned and offer a good level of challenge for most children, a few children are capable of achieving more. Children needing additional help with their learning are identified and other agencies involved as appropriate. Staff need to review the impact of children being extracted from class to have additional support to determine if this is always the best form of help. Staff need to have a shared view and understanding of how to help and support children with their learning. The school has good pastoral arrangements in place to

support children moving from nursery to P1. It would be helpful to develop further the early level stages of the curriculum as children start P1 to build on what children already know. There is a well-established transition programme to Kirkwall Grammar School which provides children in P7 with opportunities to meet their peers from other primary schools through a range of interesting activities. The school has begun to develop curricular links by working successfully with Kirkwall Grammar School to introduce Spanish as a second modern language.

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

Since his appointment at the beginning of the session, the headteacher has quickly established the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. He has successfully developed a stronger sense of teamwork amongst staff, with a clear focus on learning and teaching. Staff have been encouraged to develop their leadership skills and this is beginning to have a positive impact on children's experiences and achievements. For example, teachers successfully improved approaches to outdoor learning and they have worked together to moderate approaches to better evaluate children's writing. Staff are actively involved in developing further the approaches to track children's progress. Parents are very supportive and help with fund raising and sharing skills through visits to the school to work alongside children and staff. The recent introduction of the school website including a twitter feed provides useful information about current activities and developments in school. The headteacher recognises the importance of good communication between the school, parents and the community. We have confidence that the school will continue to improve the quality of its work.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the nursery had no requirements or recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there is one requirement and two recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Children's respectful, caring attitudes towards one another and their motivation for learning.
- The commitment of staff to improve learning experiences for children.
- Outdoor learning opportunities which have improved children's learning experiences.
- Strong partnership with parents and the local community to support and enhance the curriculum.
- Commitment and enthusiasm of headteacher to improving learning for all children.

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

- Increase opportunities for children in the nursery to make better progress in their learning and ensure all children are having their needs fully met.
- Continue to develop consistent high quality feedback to help children understand what they need to do to improve.
- Review approaches to supporting children's learning to ensure there is sufficient progress and challenge.

- Continue to develop the curriculum with a particular focus at the early stages to ensure that all children build effectively on their prior learning.

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, Orkney Islands Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Mary Ann Hagan
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/HopePrimarySchoolOrkneyIslands.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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