

Your Ref:

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08 December 2017

All Parents and Carers of Pupils at Applegarth Primary School

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Dear Parent / Carer

LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF APPELGARTH PRIMARY SCHOOL SINCE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF 8 NOVEMBER 2016

Applegarth Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland in September 2016. The inspection focussed on: learning, teaching and assessment; the curriculum; young people's attainment and achievements and leadership and management.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by Applegarth Primary School since the publication of the Education Scotland report in November 2016. The report highlighted three main aspects for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing these points.

Continue with the school's plans to revise their vision, values and aims.

The school's vision, values and aims have been reviewed. This has allowed the school and wider community to agree and promote an aspirational vision, which underpins the school's continuous improvement. Most pupils, parents, partners and staff were involved in the creation of the vision, values and aims through activities such as a parent/carers working group, Parent Council discussions, Pupil Council meetings, staff development nights, staff meetings and assemblies. As a result, the school community have ownership of the Vision, Values and Aims.

The vision focuses on the main points of 'Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to be and Learning to live and work together'. These are now the focus for termly parent/carers 'Living the Vision' events where the children present their learning and achievements to their families. The vision will continue to be evaluated through ongoing reflection following these events, involving the whole school community.

The vision is displayed in each class and every family has their own copy at home. In school, the vision is embedded through assemblies and events to help support the pupils' understanding of them. The vision, values and aims have been created across the partnership so also involve working

closely with our partner school community. The vision is ambitious and focuses on improvements in outcomes for all, including individual needs and successes. The school's vision, values and aims can now be used effectively to make future decisions.

Ensure appropriate challenge for all children by engaging with the national agenda of raising standards for all.

The School Improvement Plan focuses on the learning and teaching of literacy and numeracy and providing challenge in learning. Classroom observations focus on these areas. Feedback is given following lesson observations to improve practice and share good practice across the stages. Attainment meetings are planned between teaching staff and the Headteacher to upskill staff in analysing data to inform next steps. This is resulting in more challenge in children's learning. Additional Support for Learning staff are fully involved in setting IEP targets and monitoring progress towards next steps. Teachers' professional judgement and assessment data are used effectively by all teaching staff to identify small focus groups who work with support staff or Principal Teachers to close gaps in learning and to provide appropriate challenge to meet individual needs. The focus groups and IEP targets are monitored and evaluated termly. Teaching staff are beginning to use Higher Order Thinking questioning more effectively to promote independence and confidence in learners' assessment of their own or others' learning. This is helping all children to self and peer assess more efficiently and helps staff to plan next steps in learning with the children. Teaching staff and support staff observe pupils closely to inform well-timed interventions and future learning.

Staff use a variety of assessment approaches regularly to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in different areas across the curriculum. Teaching staff work together to develop an assessment calendar for the partnership to ensure assessment is informative and meaningful. All staff are now including a wider variety of Assessment for Learning techniques, resulting in improved knowledge of children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. This allows teachers to plan for appropriate challenge. At Cluster level, teaching staff are fully involved in developing holistic assessments and use these to show progress or achievement of a level. Assessments provide reliable evidence which is used to report on the progress of all pupils, including the setting of next steps with parents/carers during Learning Conversations. All learners are becoming more involved in planning and leading learning, reflecting on their own learning targets weekly through the adapted Home School Link books.

Continue to build on the school's work on self-evaluation to ensure on-going improvement.

All staff now have a better understanding of self-evaluation as an important tool to measure progress and improvement. The school uses a range of effective approaches to ensure all staff, parents, learners, and wider community are actively involved in ongoing self-evaluation activities; for example, questionnaires, feedback forms, Parent Council meetings, parent/carers events, Pupil Council, Eco Committee, Fair Trade group, assemblies, development nights and partnership/cluster working. Through regular work with families, the school community has a shared understanding of the school's strengths and improvement needs which are set out in the School Improvement Plan. Parents are invited to participate in working groups, are part of discussions at Parent Council meetings and have opportunities to come in to school and see improvements in action.

All staff engage with working groups across the partnership. They are beginning to analyse and use evidence to ensure a focus on priorities which will have greatest impact for learners. Small focus groups organised, in order to meet needs. These groups are monitored to gauge the impact and progress of the learners involved. The

staff share good practice within school and are beginning to demonstrate improvement as a result. Across the year, there is a focus on monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching through staff observations. There are plans to include learner opinions in these observations and to begin jotter monitoring. Staff work effectively as a team and there is a strong ethos of peer support. Staff participate in professional learning to address areas identified for improvement in order to deliver higher quality learning and teaching, particularly in the areas of music and P.E.

Applegarth Primary School demonstrates good capacity for future improvement. This is the result of the hard work and commitment of the Acting Headteacher, staff, children, parents/carers and the wider community. I wish to congratulate all within the school community on their progress over the last year.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Brydson
Head of Education