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Education & Learning Directorate

The Bridge
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To:

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
Castle Douglas Primary School**

Any enquiries please contact:

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Dear Parent / Carer

**LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF CASTLE DOUGLAS PRIMARY SCHOOL
SINCE THE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF MAY 2019**

Castle Douglas Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland in May 2019. The inspection focussed on learning, teaching and assessment and children's attainment and achievements.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education and Learning Directorate, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by Castle Douglas Primary School since the publication of the Education Scotland report in August 2019. The report highlighted three main aspects for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing these points.

Continue to raise attainment for all children and develop further assessment and moderation approaches.

Continuing to raise attainment for all children remains a focus. All teachers use a wide range of assessment materials, alongside professional conversations to accurately track children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels. Across each stage of the school, working groups meet regularly to discuss and implement clear progressive planning.

Regular attainment meetings between all teaching staff and the leadership team ensure challenge and ambition for all children. Staff work with colleagues across the Castle

Douglas cluster to moderate professional judgements and to share best practice. This collaboration confirms teachers' professional judgements of children's progress is more accurate and robust. Working together as a staff team, including with ELC and Learning Centre staff, the school ensures assessment and moderation is consistent, thorough and evidenced. This ensures children are supported to learn at the appropriate level and that they make good progress.

All staff have worked to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on learning by developing imaginative approaches to teaching including using a wide range of online learning approaches. Staff have used a range of methods to ensure appropriate pace and challenge. One to one, group and class online Teams meetings were held to support and challenge children while learning remotely. Feedback from parents noted the positive support received, and the emphasis on communication between home and school and between pupil and teacher ensured staff had a clear understanding of the attainment of their learners and appropriate next steps.

Develop further approaches to ensure robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress in their learning across all curriculum areas and in wider achievement.

Almost all staff are confident in using a range of formal assessments, learning conversations and observations from a range of situations, including outdoor learning, to build an accurate picture of a child's strengths.

The school has further developed a tracking and monitoring system to ensure breadth and depth of knowledge across all subject areas. Planning and benchmark grids not only ensure there is coverage and progression in knowledge and skills but are also being used for both planning and assessment. In this way teachers can focus on the learning of every child. All staff are confident in using these tools in planning appropriate next steps.

During the two periods of lockdown, staff developed learning grids to be accessed by the children and families incorporating learning across the curriculum. The school used social media to encourage pupils to share their wider achievements including creations for the Castle Douglas Bake Off alongside other 'Magic Moments'. Children used their class emails as well as social media to share their wider achievements which are taken into consideration by class teachers, especially in planning learning opportunities and next steps.

Continue to develop the school's systems for self-evaluation to help identify key improvement priorities which support the school's context.

The school continues to develop a collegiate system for self-evaluation as an ongoing feature of school life. The school has utilised formal surveys across the community and encourages regular feedback through social media and class emails. Pupil voice is embedded throughout the school. Outside the representation of House Captains and School Councillors, all pupils are informally asked their opinions on specific and wide-ranging topics. Pupils' interests and concerns inform future planning and learning.

Communication with the Parent Council is very good and any concerns are discussed and actioned as necessary with shared responsibility.

Staff are outward and forward looking in their evaluation and improvement activities and have utilised social media to access examples of good practice and online training. Digital networking has been important, particularly in the time of Covid-19, and this is supporting the school to look further afield at good practice evident across Scotland and beyond.

Staff and leaders have utilised tracking and assessment data, as well as the results of monitoring learning and teaching, to identify the strengths of the school as well as potential areas for improvement. All teachers work effectively with colleagues to ensure the school's strengths are built on and take action to remove the barriers to success.

During the recent lockdowns, actively seeking the involvement of all stakeholders was particularly important in identifying the curriculum and support needs of all children. The school is aware of the need to prioritise wellbeing in order for pupils to achieve; and the need to support families and staff to further improve the life and work of the school.

Since the Education Scotland inspection, and considering particular challenges encountered due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Castle Douglas Primary has continued to demonstrate a very good capacity for future improvement. This is the result of the hard work and commitment of the staff team, children and families. I wish to congratulate all within the school community of Castle Douglas on their progress over the last year.

Yours sincerely

Jim Brown
Head of Education (Curriculum & Quality) and Chief Education Officer