

20 September 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Burray Primary School and Nursery Class  
Orkney Islands Council**

We are trying out some new approaches to inspection. You can find more information about why we are doing this, and details of our new approaches, at the links below.<sup>1</sup>

As you may know, in May 2016, I inspected your child's school following a two-working-day notification period. 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. Following on from what the headteacher told me we planned inspection activity which enabled us 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 and at the primary stages are lively and enthusiastic learners who are very proud of their school and local community. There is a strong family ethos in the P1-P7 class. Children demonstrate great care and consideration for each other. This is evident in class, during lunchtime and at play in the school grounds. In the nursery, children enjoy very good learning experiences both indoors and outdoors. They play very well together and persevere to find solutions to challenges. For example, children communicated and co-operated well to construct a junk model tractor. They are developing independence and enjoy organising resources for play, including mixing ingredients to prepare paste for modelling. In the primary class, children really appreciate the range and quality of learning experiences at school, especially the frequent opportunities to learn outdoors and in the community. At the primary stages, almost all children demonstrate their independence well and can organise themselves efficiently and quickly during their individual or group tasks. They work diligently when the teacher is supporting others, and older children work very well with their younger classmates. All staff talk to children on a daily basis about their learning, including providing them with helpful feedback on how they can improve their work. The purpose of lessons is shared and reviewed routinely as part of learning. As a result, almost all children can talk about how well they are doing, what

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<sup>1</sup> [Trying out new approaches - Future approaches to inspection and review - Inspection and review](#)

sorts of things they want to know and be able to do, and can identify their next steps in learning.

Children feel that their ideas and opinions are taken seriously by staff. All children have opportunities to influence learning and the life of the school. This includes planning the new outdoor play area and their active participation as musicians in the 'GlastonBurray' festival. All children benefit from a range of educational visits and from visitors to the school. Older children develop a range of skills on their residential trip to the Scottish mainland.

Children in the nursery are making very good progress in developing early literacy and numeracy skills. Children use pictures well to interpret stories, and enjoy 'reading' books alongside staff. They often practise mark-making, writing simple words and writing numbers when playing in different areas of the nursery. During play, children use mathematical language, for example making comparisons when sorting and matching toy zoo animals. They recognise seasonal changes and weather, and enjoyed tracking the pathway of the sun across the playground. Across the primary stages, almost all children are currently making very good progress in mathematics, reading and writing. Children requiring additional support are making steady progress, through the active approaches to learning and teaching and very well-judged assistance from teachers and support staff. All children are eager to contribute to discussions and listen well to each other in group and class activities. This included when explaining the steps they take in leading an active and healthy life at school and at home. We have asked staff to plan more opportunities to extend children's skills in listening and talking in more complex contexts. Most children are confident and expressive readers. They read a range of texts in and out of school and most talk with enthusiasm about books they have read. Children enjoyed reading 'The BFG' aloud to their classmates, giving each character a different voice. They demonstrate effective comprehension skills in regular reading tasks, and can select key facts from the internet to inform their research and writing. As children move through the school, they make very good progress in writing, and are proud to talk about their work. For example, their recent poetry writing about the battle of Jutland was informative and emotive. Children's handwriting and presentation are of a high standard. Children enjoy mathematics. They appreciate the active and varied approaches that teachers use to introduce and consolidate different aspects of mathematics work. As a result, children are developing an appropriate awareness of how mathematical and numeracy skills are used across their learning and in real life. For example, they applied their knowledge of patterns on a recent visit to St Magnus Cathedral. They are developing confidence in mental calculation and enjoy practising their skills in games with their classmates. Younger children had a good knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and older children could identify angles in the classroom and describe their properties. At the primary stages, children have developed skills in drawing and painting and present detailed line drawings of plants and flowers. In music, they know the names of orchestral instruments and can identify instruments by their sound when listening to orchestral pieces. Staff recognise the need to continue to extend the range of digital tools for use across the curriculum.

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

The headteacher and staff are very clear that the curriculum at Burray Primary School enables children to develop a sense of identity and should equip them with skills for their future lives. This appropriate vision has been developed and shared successfully with the whole school community. Across the nursery and primary stages, staff use national guidance well to plan children's learning. In the nursery and in the primary class, they respond to children's interests and involve children in planning topics to be explored. Children in the nursery enjoyed planning healthy snacks for the week. The school has begun to develop a range of pathways across the curriculum to ensure children experience a broad general education, and these support staff in planning learning. Children's learning across the curriculum is enhanced by support from a range of partners, including local artists and museums. Staff and children make the most of the rural location and historical setting of the school. They use the school grounds, the proximity to the sea and the rich Orkney culture and heritage to provide children with stimulating and relevant learning contexts. There are frequent opportunities for children to learn outdoors and to foster a deep connection with their local community and environment. Members of the local community were impressed by the children's commitment to bird watching and encouraging the protection of the 'little terns' on the beach.

Whole-school themes, such as learning about the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Jutland provide exciting contexts for children to learn together across age groups. This adds to the 'family' ethos of the school. The school has strong relationships with nearby Hope Primary School and Kirkwall Grammar. Children benefit from the visiting specialists in physical education, music and art and design. Arrangements to support children as they move into P1 and from P7 to secondary school are effective and take account of individual needs.

Relationships between adults and children are caring and highly supportive. This helps to create a nurturing environment for learning where all children can achieve and feel valued. Classroom assistants and administrative staff play a key role in supporting children and in the wider life of the school. Teachers effectively identify children's individual needs and any barriers to learning. Children who may need extra help in their learning are very well supported. Where appropriate, the school liaises closely with partners and support agencies to ensure that the needs of children are met effectively. Overall, there is a well-considered balance of ways for children to learn in lessons, such as individually or in pairs and groups. This ensures all children can be successful in their learning. Almost all parents are very positive about almost all aspects of the school. Parents and the local community feel that the school communicates very well with them. They are provided with regular updates on school events as well as information on what their children will be learning in class. Parents are welcome visitors in the school on a daily basis and support learning and the life of the school very well.

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

Burray Primary School and Nursery Class demonstrate strong capacity for continuous improvement. The headteacher and principal teacher are hugely committed to the children at Burray Primary School. Their leadership is respected by all staff, children

and parents. Together, they successfully promote a culture of teamwork which is clearly leading to improvements for children. Staff are developing robust systems to predict, track and monitor children's progress as they move through the nursery and primary stages. The headteacher uses a number of important and helpful monitoring activities throughout the year to check on standards for individual children. These monitoring activities include working with children in the nursery and primary class every day. She observes lessons, holding individual discussions with all children about their learning, and ensuring there are frequent opportunities for professional dialogue amongst staff. This includes engagement with colleagues from Hope Primary School and other schools across the islands. All teachers and support staff are reflective about their own classroom practice and keen to research good practice outwith their school. The impact of these successful approaches to self-evaluation are leading to improvements across the curriculum, particularly in literacy, numeracy and the development of meaningful learning activities. The school actively seeks the views of children, parents, staff and community partners as a core part of its work. Recent areas for consultation have included the school's vision, values and aims and approaches to improving outdoor learning.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident, articulate and very well-behaved children who are motivated in their learning and play.
- High-quality learning experiences enjoyed by all children in the nursery and primary class and children's very good progress in literacy and numeracy and mathematics.
- Very positive relationships and shared values across the school and wider school community which contributes to children's wellbeing, achievement and attainment.
- Rich learning experiences that enable children to make the most of the history, geography and culture of their local area and the effective engagement with partners and the local community to enhance and support children's learning.
- The leadership of the headteacher, and the dedication of all staff to providing a caring and motivating ethos for learning.

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

- Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure children achieve as highly as possible across all areas of 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.

Susan R Duff  
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/BurrayPrimarySchoolOrkneyIslands.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.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: [complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk) or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.