

12 January 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

Lomond School, Helensburgh

HM Inspectors recently visited Lomond School. The visit was part of our quality improvement and professional engagement visits with independent schools which complement the general programme of inspections. The approach allows us to maintain our knowledge of schools in the independent sector throughout Scotland, and provides assurance to parents on the school's capacity for evaluating its own work and making improvements which have a direct impact on the quality of experiences for its young people. Our visit was based on the school's self-evaluation and priorities identified for school improvement. During our visit inspectors talked to staff, children and young people and worked together with the Principal and senior staff about the planned developments to ensure outcomes for children and young people continue to improve.

How well does the school ensure outcomes for children / young people continue to improve?

All promoted staff, including those who have been recently appointed, fulfil their roles ably and have a clear focus on striving for improvement through self-evaluation. Each member of the senior leadership team has a clear remit for ensuring high-quality provision within their area of school life. They carry out a range of monitoring activities, including observing learning and teaching. Together, they have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for further development across the school. Very clear and effective improvement planning approaches allow staff to prioritise accurately key areas for improvement. The Principal provides astute, inspiring leadership and is highly respected by the school community. She encourages staff and learners to take the lead and show initiative in a variety of situations and values their contributions to school life. New posts such as Head of Adventure and Service, Head of Careers and Future Destinations, and Head of Digital Strategy and E-Learning add value to the leadership and direction of the school. Young people speak very highly about the introduction of these posts and the positive impact on their experiences.

Through the highly effective work of the Principal in establishing guiding principles and core values for the school community, Lomond School has a clear vision which has been agreed and shared effectively with children and young people, parents and staff. This vision focuses on preparing learners to achieve their potential and to take an active role in their community and as international citizens in a changing world. Staff across the school help children and young people to develop as successful learners and confident individuals by providing motivating and relevant opportunities for them to develop their talents and to experience challenge and adventure. The whole-school approach to self-evaluation and improvement is leading to joined-up thinking, working

and a shared purpose across the nursery, junior and senior stages of the school. As staff now work to embed the guiding principles and values in their daily work, they have a strengthened focus to plan coherent and progressive learning experiences as children move through the school.

At all stages of the school, children and young people are highly motivated and actively involved in their learning. They are respectful, hard-working and respond very well to the overall high-quality learning experiences. In the nursery, children are developing their independence very well through nursery routines such as getting themselves dressed for Forest Schools sessions. They are encouraged to be curious and inquisitive. They apply their early literacy and numeracy skills well in real-life contexts, including through learning outdoors. In all lessons observed at the junior and Transitus stages, children are encouraged to think for themselves, discuss, debate and investigate in groups, in pairs and individually. They are motivated by interesting and relevant learning experiences that are often linked to their topic work.

At the senior stages, young people are developing a wide range of skills and attributes to prepare them for life, learning and the world of work. The school has sought the views of young people, parents and staff on the curriculum at the senior stages. As a result, staff have improved the range of experiences on offer to young people and now provide a wider range of learning pathways. New courses and programmes have been introduced to meet young people's needs and aspirations. These include health and food technology, hospitality, Spanish, drama, photography and sports leaders awards. Senior leaders plan to review and develop the curriculum further in the coming years. Staff should continue to build on and share good practice in learning and teaching, in order to provide consistently high-quality learning experiences across the senior stages. There have been recent improvements in measures of attainment particularly at S5 and S6. For example, in 2015 the proportion of young people achieving one or more Higher awards at Grade A has reached its highest level in the last five years. In other measures, levels of attainment have been maintained in recent years, with high proportions of young people who have been presented for National Qualifications, achieving A-C passes. A few parents would like more detailed information on their children's learning within the regular progress reports, and the school has plans to further improve its systems for tracking and reporting on learners' progress.

Learners express their opinions and ideas confidently and they appreciate the improved opportunities for them to be involved in decision making, for example through the Environment Committee and Pupil Learning Council. Young people readily take responsibility for aspects of their learning and lead and contribute to group tasks very ably. Children and young people feel that the arrangements for pastoral support within the school are very effective. They appreciate the positive and supportive relationships that they have with teachers. Teachers work closely with the pastoral team and other professionals in order to provide sensitive, well-judged support for individuals. Young people themselves play an important role in creating the supportive and caring ethos of the school by acting as peer and academic mentors, buddies, prefects and heads of houses. Young people take these responsibilities very seriously and receive helpful training in order to carry out their roles. All staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep children and young people safe and well cared for. A small number of learners and parents are unsure about how

bullying is dealt with by staff. The school should continue to keep approaches to dealing with bullying under review.

Children and young people are justifiably proud of their school. They are benefiting from a wide range of opportunities within and beyond the school grounds. Relationships between children, young people and staff are very positive. Almost all learners believe that they are treated fairly and with respect. Almost all say that they enjoy school and that they are becoming more confident. Children and young people really appreciate the extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer to them. As a result, they make the most of this provision and many achieve very well in a variety of musical, drama, cultural and sporting activities. Overall, parents are very positive about most areas of the work of the school. They feel that staff are open and approachable. Almost all parents say that staff know their children well as individuals. Around one fifth of parents who responded to Education Scotland's survey reported that they did not think that the school asked for their views. The school have identified stakeholder engagement as a priority in this year's improvement plan and have made considerable progress in this area. The school leadership team should continue with their plans to further embed approaches to communication and consultation, including ways to provide feedback directly to the whole school community on actions and decisions that have been taken.

There is a strong culture of teamwork and collegiality across the school. Staff are outward looking and keen to improve the work of the school further. They ensure their professional learning helps them take action on priorities identified for improvement. Staff working groups collaborate very well to explore themes such as curriculum development and effective learning and teaching. There are many examples across the school of staff's outward looking approach to researching good practice, for example in taking forward a digital strategy for the school and in embedding the outstanding approaches to outdoor learning.

The Board of Governors provide helpful guidance and direction for the future success of the school. Significant investment in the school's facilities has led to the creation of improved nursery provision, the drama studio, sports complex and in maintaining and improving the overall learning and teaching environment across the campus and boarding house. As a result, Lomond School is a vibrant, welcoming and very well resourced school.

We are confident the school has the necessary arrangements and procedures in place to ensure continued improvement in the quality of education provided. The school and Board of Governors will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the progress of the school.

Lesley A Johnstone
HM Inspector

Additional evidence for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/LomondSchoolArgyllandBute.asp>

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