

9 September 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

Craigclowan Preparatory School, Perth

HM Inspectors recently visited Craigclowan Preparatory 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 and children and worked together with the headmaster and senior staff about the planned developments to ensure outcomes for children continue to improve.

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

Craigclowan Preparatory School is a welcoming, caring and stimulating environment for learning. Staff have suitably high expectations for all children. Rigorous tracking of children's progress helps staff identify children who need additional support or extra challenge. Parents and children really appreciate the dedication and valuable support of pre-school staff, teachers and assistants. As a result, children are highly motivated, feel well cared for and are making strong progress in their learning. In the pre-school, children are learning about sounds, letters and numbers through exciting activities and daily routines. In the preparatory classes, almost all children attain very high standards in their learning. They have very good opportunities to apply their skills and confidence in mathematics and English by participating and achieving success in national mathematics, creative writing and debating competitions. Over a number of years, older children have performed consistently strongly in Common Entrance examinations. Significant numbers are successful in gaining academic, music and sports scholarships to senior schools. In recent years, all children have gone on to attend their first choice of senior school.

Across the school, the importance of learning beyond the classroom is an essential part of children's experiences. The school provides a broad and stimulating curriculum, which is enhanced by an extensive range of visits to places of interest, visitors to the school and residential trips. The promotion and celebration of music is a strong feature of the school. The choirs, pipe band and soloists frequently achieve success in school, local and national performances. There is a growing focus on encouraging participation and enjoyment in out-of-class activities, as well as

celebrating individual excellence. For example, to extend the programme of competitive sports fixtures against other independent schools, staff are taking action to increase the numbers of these matches, in order that more children will have the chance to compete. Children's academic, sporting and musical achievements are acknowledged at prize-giving services and assemblies, and also through various awards and certificates. We discussed with staff ways to now also celebrate a wider range of skills and talents that children demonstrate across the life of the school.

At all stages, children are articulate and enthusiastic learners. In the pre-school, children benefit from a range of interesting play experiences in the playrooms and outdoors. They like to make their own choices and are becoming independent. They help to plan their own learning and record their ideas in floor books. Across the preparatory classes, children take a very active and responsible approach to their learning. They make choices and decisions in planning aspects of their work. Their motivation and enthusiasm often leads them to set high goals for themselves. As a result of very helpful feedback from teachers, children have a very good understanding of their own strengths and next steps in learning. They talk thoughtfully about what sorts of things they want to know and be able to do. They produce work of a very high standard across different areas of their learning. Children appreciate tasks and challenges which require them to think for themselves and demonstrate their creativity, such as the popular Dragon's Den enterprise competition. The school now plans to develop further children's use of information and communications technology (ICT) across their learning, and to extend opportunities for learning outdoors in the outstanding school grounds.

Children are very proud of their school and have good ideas about how to make the life and work of the school even better. Older children play an active role through acting as prefects and house captains. Members of the eco committee and pupil council have consulted their peers and taken an important role in promoting environmental issues and improving the playground. There is scope to now capitalise on children's analytical and communication skills by involving them more directly in evaluating their learning experiences in classes and across the life of the school. Overall, parents are very positive and supportive of the work of the school. A few parents feel that aspects of communication between school and home could be further improved, and are keen to move ahead with establishing a parents' liaison group. Around one fifth of parents who responded to the Education Scotland survey felt that the school did not actively seek their views or listen to them well enough. We have discussed with the school ways in which they can improve approaches to seeking the views of all stakeholders, and to communicate more effectively the results of consultative exercises.

Along with the supportive board of governors, the headmaster has developed a carefully considered visionary plan for the future development of the school. With purposeful leadership from the headmaster and senior managers, staff use self-evaluation very well to identify priorities for improvement. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Teachers and pre-school staff develop their professional skills regularly to support improvements in learning and teaching. They are very open to new ideas, engage in professional dialogue and share practice with each other. They are keen to now research innovation in other schools, for example in order to develop a new ICT strategy for Craigclowan.

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

9 September 2014

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 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.