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Dear Parent/Carer

Seamab School
Rumbling Bridge

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's school. Throughout our visit we talked to parents and children and we worked closely with the principal and staff. We wanted to find out how well children were learning and achieving and how well the school supported them to do their best. The principal shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work including the out of school contribution of care staff to the education of children, the effectiveness of assessment and the progress made in developing children's literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children like the school. They feel safe and well cared for and enjoy practical learning activities in class. Most know what they are expected to learn in each lesson. However, children are not sufficiently motivated by some of the desk based tasks which are often set at a low level. They should have more opportunities to learn through exploration, discovery and play, especially outdoors. They need to be given more opportunities to solve problems, take planned risks and take more responsibility. Children have good opportunities to give their views in the residences. Care staff encourage children to do their homework and read with them.

Children make very good progress in personal and social development. All children have achieved success at various levels in a wide range of sports and physical activities. By taking part in eco activities, children have an awareness of the need to save and recycle resources, and take care of the environment. Through living in the residences with others in a well-structured safe environment, children have successfully achieved acceptable standards of behaviour so that they can now behave appropriately in public places, take turns and play games with others.

¹ This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as this will not connect.

The school has not yet developed a robust system for tracking attainment in literacy and numeracy or in the other six curriculum areas. As a consequence, staff could not provide detailed evidence on each child's educational progress. The detailed annual reports for parents and carers show that children are making progress in literacy and numeracy, and in the other curriculum areas. When given the opportunity, children are using their literacy skills in different activities. For example, a few children have written information booklets about birds while others have written science reports. Care staff encourage the development of literacy skills in the bungalows, for example, by helping children write letters to the 'Dr Who' magazine. Children's achievements in numeracy and mathematics vary in each class. From their study of science topics, children know facts about the human body, the skeleton and major organs. They know some of the properties of gases, liquids and solids and in one class they have a good knowledge of electricity. Children know about different types of food and aspects of farming and are developing knowledge of healthy and unhealthy foods. Their involvement in gardening is giving them a deeper understanding of the relationship between farming and food production.

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

Seamab has excellent systems for identifying and monitoring social and emotional needs which may impact on children's learning. Education and care staff work together very effectively in the best interests of children. Teachers plans include all of the important subjects. They should review timetabling arrangements to ensure a better balance of learning activities over the week, including more high quality physical education. Teachers are beginning to provide children with more stimulating learning experiences such as the horse husbandry project. While some teachers plan motivating activities which provide opportunities for literacy and numeracy development, children have too few opportunities to make links across their learning. Children would benefit from more opportunities to learn outdoors. They respond better to opportunities in class to choose activities and resources related to their interests. The school is meeting successfully children's social, emotional and mental health needs. Children enjoy opportunities to develop personal interests through horse-riding, basketball, swimming and ice-skating. Care staff take account of children's individual interests when planning these activities and organising the programme of trips, outings and attendance at clubs in the local community. Children are helped very well to settle on arriving at the school and are well prepared for moving on from the service. Care staff supported by the school's partners and specialist staff provide very effective therapeutic support for individual children. All of this work is monitored and evaluated regularly. Classroom assistants provide well-targeted and valuable support for individual children. All children have an integrated care and education support plan, which is reviewed regularly. Care staff frequently talk to the children about their targets so that the children know and understand them. Children would benefit from simpler more manageable targets.

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

The recently appointed principal and the other senior managers have a clear vision for Seamab. They are committed to using self-evaluation to continuously improve the school. They use a wide range of ways to evaluate the performance of education and care. The findings from these activities are collated in the school's standards and quality report and this informs the annual improvement plan. The evaluations of learning and teaching provided by the education manager highlight good practice, especially in the way staff manage challenging behaviour. A sharper, more refined approach is now required to identify ways of improving children's learning experiences. Teachers reflect on their work on a daily basis and adjust their programmes to meet the needs of children. Senior managers and staff identify training needs and address them through a range of courses and training activities. Improvement plans should be simplified by having fewer and more important education targets to ensure that they are more readily understood and implemented by staff. The

principal has strong strategic management skills and is looking at a number of areas to guide the future development of the school. With the board of governors, she is considering ways of further developing the school and the range of services it provides for children, families and education authorities.

This inspection of your school found the following key strengths.

- The success the school achieves in helping children to engage with and continue their education.
- Close and effective teamwork between the education and care staff.
- The quality of support for children's emotional and social development throughout their time at the school.
- High quality care provided in well-equipped, homely bungalows.

We discussed with staff and a representative of the board of governors how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve the curriculum to make it more relevant to children's interests including making better use of the local environment.
- Provide more meaningful tasks, activities and resources.
- Increase opportunities for children to contribute their views and take more responsibility for the daily routines of the school.
- When evaluating classroom practice, senior managers and teachers should place a greater emphasis on improving the quality of children's learning experiences.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. With support from the board of governors and Education Scotland the school will be able to make the necessary improvements. Our independent schools link inspector along with the board of governors will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Terry Carr
HM Inspector

Marion Neil
Care 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.hmie.gov.uk/ViewEstablishment.aspx?id=7717&type=2> .

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation. You can contact us at enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact 01506 600200, or write to us at the above address or e-mail: feedback@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk.