

11 September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

**Loirston School and Nursery Class
Aberdeen City Council**

In May 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeen City Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

Establish effective approaches to self-evaluation and strategic planning, which support leadership at all levels to secure improvements across the school and nursery.

The school has continued to experience staffing changes and challenges. At the time of this inspection, the new headteacher had been in post for five weeks. He has already gained the trust and respect of the staff and children, and has clearly used time effectively to get to know the school well. Aberdeen City Council has supported the school effectively and the school's vision, values and aims are now in place and clearly understood by staff and children.

Following the inspection last year staff worked well together to improve how they review the work of the school and identify areas for improvement. They are honest about the effort and challenge this has presented and they are to be commended for the work already undertaken. Staff have engaged in a range of professional learning opportunities and in-service days and collegiate time have been used well to support improvement. Staff are now more outward looking and are learning from others in Aberdeen and beyond. There is a clear commitment to ensuring this is leading to improvements in children's experiences. For example, across the school teachers now make more effective use of assessment to plan the next steps in children's learning. Practitioners in the nursery are reflective and are beginning to use national guidance such as *How good is our early learning and childcare?* and Care Inspectorate standards to support reviewing practice. This is not yet leading to improvements in practice in the nursery and there is now a need to develop a shared

strategic overview across both the nursery and primary stages. The school should seek to involve parents more fully as part of the improvement journey.

The quality of learning and teaching across the school is continuing to improve. The needs of most children requiring additional support are met well in lessons. Teachers use learning intentions well to make clear what it is children are learning. In a few classes activities at the end of the school day are not always productive and lead to a loss of valuable time for children's learning. School leaders should continue to monitor children's experiences regularly to ensure children are actively engaged in consistently high quality learning. The majority of children in the nursery engage in activities for short periods of time. There is a need to continue to improve practitioners' questioning skills and to provide activities which better engage children in their learning.

School staff have taken full account of the evaluations, advice and outcomes of the inspection last year. As a result, good progress has been made in addressing the improvement points. Approaches to self-evaluation and strategic planning in the primary stages are improving. As this work is at the early stages of implementation, it is too early to report on any impact on children's attainment and achievement. Under the leadership of the new headteacher the school is well placed to continue its improvement journey.

Develop the school's curriculum, taking full account of national guidance and expectations to ensure learning experiences lead to improvements in children's attainment across all curricular areas.

The school is making good progress in taking forward this area for improvement and children are enjoying learning across an improved range of curriculum areas. The school now plans to develop its curriculum to take better account of the unique context of the school within the community of Cove Bay and as a part of Aberdeen City. School aims, values and vision statements are displayed around the school and these are referred to by staff in the daily life of the school. There is a strong emphasis on trying hard 'Don't give up, great things take time'. In the nursery there are now more opportunities for literacy and numeracy, including when learning outdoors. Interactive learning journals are in place to share learning with parents. It would be beneficial to now review the purpose of the learning journals, including planning for how parents can be more fully involved in their child's learning.

Planning learning and teaching in the Primary stages now makes use of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. The newly developed learning pathways also guide staff in their use of National Benchmarks. Children in the nursery are more confident in using the additional resources which have been purchased, including in digital technologies. Whilst transition visits are undertaken to P1 classes in the summer term, consideration should now be given to joint early level planning where appropriate, in order to ensure smooth progression in children's learning.

The school team has worked well together to develop whole-school approaches to interdisciplinary learning. They also have a clearer understanding of how to plan and manage learning in discrete curriculum areas. Staff should continue to plan together, to offer a range of learning experiences which support children to acquire

and develop a broad range of knowledge and skills. There is emerging evidence of children growing in awareness of the world of work and staff should ensure that opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work are embedded across the curriculum. The headteacher has clear plans to involve parents and children in the continued improvement of the curriculum at Loirston School.

The school should continue its work to improve the curriculum. Consistently high quality approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment will be key to supporting children at all stages to improve progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Develop and implement robust processes to plan, assess, track and monitor children's learning. This includes the need to review the school's arrangements for meeting the needs of children requiring additional support.

Across the school and nursery, staff have very caring relationships with children. However, there is not yet a consistent system for identifying the needs of children requiring additional support. More robust planning is also required to meet the needs of all learners. This should be addressed in line with advice from the education authority, including the need for an overview of children requiring support in their learning. The school has developed a set of additional support guidelines. The school should continue to develop, and implement, these guidelines across the school and nursery ensuring this leads to children requiring additional support receiving appropriate support to meet their needs.

A new whole-school system is in place to support the tracking and monitoring of children's progress and tracking meetings are scheduled for next session. Senior managers should continue with their plans to analyse this information to ensure children identified as experiencing difficulties are given appropriate levels of support. Practitioners in the nursery have started to implement new procedures for tracking learning. The role of keyworkers has been introduced and the school should now ensure parents fully understand what this role means for their child. Practitioners should review how well the new split class arrangement and the allocation of key workers is supporting tracking of learning. This review should also include how children are allocated to classes and how keyworkers are allocated. In the nursery there is not yet a consistent approach to tracking whether next steps in children's learning have been achieved.

Staff are developing their moderation skills and working with the National Benchmarks, and data from Scottish National Standardised Assessments, to assess children's progress. The school should continue to develop teachers confidence in using these approaches.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. This is not consistent across the school and nursery. We will ask for a report, with particular reference to the nursery, on progress within 12 months of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action that we intend to take.

Graeme Gordon
HM Inspector

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.

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