

3 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Grantown Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The Highland 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.

Strengthen the leadership and direction of the school and nursery. The senior leadership team need to plan for improvement in a more strategic and focused way. In doing so, they need to monitor closely the impact of the nursery's and school's work to raise attainment and improve outcomes for children.

The school and nursery have made significant progress in this aspect of its work. The education authority appointed an interim headteacher and acting depute headteacher since the original inspection. This arrangement of senior staff has brought about effective leadership of change and improvement to the work of the school and nursery. The interim headteacher has worked closely with staff, parents and partners and successfully gained their respect. She is ably supported by the acting depute headteacher. The acting depute headteacher, also an experienced headteacher is now appointed to the substantive headteacher post at Grantown Primary School. The leadership team has worked well together to develop systems and supports to guide staff and develop good practice. They have provided staff with opportunities for professional learning in other schools and early years establishments and education authorities. Teachers and the nursery team are leading a range of school developments and sharing their learning well with one another. Their morale is high and the learning environment for children is very positive.

Across the school and nursery, children's behaviour is very good. Approaches to monitoring children's progress and the quality of learning and teaching are implemented consistently and leading to raised expectations. Overall, the school and its community are proud of the achievements since the original inspection. The leadership team and staff have raised standards and expectations leading to children making improved progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should continue to improve communications with parents and staff. They should ensure the positive start made to implementing positive approaches to encourage children's good behaviour is understood fully by all. The school should take forward its partnership working with parents to involve them more in supporting their children's learning at home.

Improve learning, teaching and assessment to ensure children are fully engaged in their learning and that learning experiences are of a consistently high quality across the school and nursery. Staff recognise the need to continue to promote positive behaviour and respect in all aspects of school life.

Teachers, support staff and nursery practitioners work effectively together to ensure children are ready to learn. Together they have created a whole school approach to effective learning and teaching. This creates a positive learning environment where children are motivated to learn and behave well. Teachers are working towards sustaining consistency in high quality lessons across the school. In most lessons and play sessions in the nursery, teachers and practitioners use questioning effectively to build on children's ideas. They provide helpful feedback and judge the pace of learning well. In most observed activities, children listen well and respond positively to questions and activities. Cooperative group work is helping children to learn effectively together and supports those who require additional help. There is a need to increase the level of challenge for a few children. Overall, the majority of children are making very good progress in writing and reading and good progress in numeracy. Teachers should continue to share their strengths and support one another as they implement new resources and approaches. Across the school and nursery, staff have improved how they plan children's learning and track their progress. They should now work together to develop a common approach to assessment.

Improve how staff use information on children's progress across the school and nursery to ensure that children's work helps improve their attainment. Staff should develop consistent approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring.

Senior leaders meet regularly with school staff and practitioners in the nursery to discuss standardised test results and assessment information. These meetings are well focused on the progress of individuals and groups. Time is provided for teachers and practitioners to share planning for learning and children's next steps. These discussions are leading to children making better progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels. Staff are becoming more confident in using information from assessments to measure children's progress. The school should take forward its plans to develop the use of data further and analyse the school's progress in raising attainment over time. The recently introduced approaches to developing skills in literacy and numeracy are beginning to raise attainment. The acting deputy headteacher holds weekly meetings with the nursery staff team to ensure a consistent focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children's learning experiences are well planned and are encouraging children to express their views and interests. Senior leaders should continue to support and challenge staff to make accurate judgements about Curriculum for Excellence levels. The school should continue to refine curriculum plans to include pathways for all curricular areas. This will support staff to ensure children build on their previous learning as they progress through the school.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The Highland Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector