

26 November 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In November 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on East Craigs Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The City of Edinburgh Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting 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 headteacher should provide clear direction to the work of the school. In doing this there is a need to establish robust approaches to evaluate the quality of the school's work. This should help identify appropriate improvements required.

The acting headteacher, senior leaders and staff have made strong progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders and the school community worked together well to review and refresh the school's vision, values and aims. This included consultation and discussion with children, parents, carers and partners. The refreshed vision, values and aims are helping to establish a common purpose for the school community and provide clear direction and levels of expectation that children and staff understand.

Senior leaders and staff have developed a school improvement plan which sets out clearly the priorities across the year. They have identified appropriate areas of improvement. These include improving approaches to learning and teaching, raising attainment in writing, and developing the curriculum. As result of this work, all staff members have clear roles which match to aspects the school aims to improve. Staff have agreed appropriate actions and timescales to ensure they improve the quality of children's experiences and improve outcomes for children.

Senior leaders have developed an effective calendar of activities that help evaluate the quality of the school's work. Teachers, senior leaders, parents, the local authority and children are engaged in activities that evaluate the work of the school. For example, children engage in pupil focus groups which provide staff with useful information on the progress and impact of school improvement priorities. Parents provide their views on the work of the school through a parent and carer survey questionnaire. Senior leaders use well information from these activities to inform their decision making and plans. Senior leaders should extend this good practice to involve parents and partners in evaluating the quality of the school's work and agreeing improvement priorities.

Staff should improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure all children receive a consistently high-quality learning experience across the school. This will help ensure that children have appropriate challenge and support in their learning.

Senior leaders and staff have made effective progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders and staff have worked together well to create a new learning and teaching policy. This sets a clear expectation of what effective learning and teaching should look like in lessons. All teachers benefit from high-quality professional learning to support whole school improvement in learning and teaching. Senior leaders undertake regularly activity to help them evaluate the quality of learning and teaching across the school. This involves senior leaders visiting classrooms to observe teaching, reviewing children's work and talking to children about their experiences. Senior leaders provide useful feedback to teachers individually following this activity to support them to identify what is working well and where further improvement is required. As a result of staff's work on improving the quality of learning and teaching, children are more engaged in lessons and teaching and learning experiences are improving.

Senior leaders have introduced robust processes which provide guidance and support for teachers to plan more effectively to meet the needs of all learners. Senior leaders and teachers meet together regularly to review and evaluate approaches to planning children's learning. This includes reflection on how well teachers plan at the right level of difficulty for individual children. Teachers now need to plan greater challenge for children who require it. Senior leaders ensure that children's voices are central to the review of planning. Children acting as learning and teaching leaders seek the views of their peers to identify and share what helps them learn effectively. Teachers use this information to help shape future planning. This is having a positive impact on improving children's learning experiences and supporting them to make better progress.

Staff teaching children in the early years have made changes to the classroom layout. This supports successfully children's ability to explore and be more creative and curious. As a result, children apply their learning in different ways and experience greater opportunities to learn successfully through play. Teachers should continue to use national and local authority guidance to support them as they develop further play experiences for children.

All staff need to improve approaches to promoting and supporting positive relationships and behaviour across the school.

Senior leaders and staff have made very positive progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders have prioritised correctly improving school ethos, relationships and behaviour. They have shared with all stakeholders the Promoting Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy. This policy establishes effectively a shared language which is used with all children to promote positive relationships. All staff are confident in using agreed approaches and in the expectations and responsibilities relating to bullying. Staff support children very effectively to understand these expectations in classes, around the school and at assemblies. Children talk confidently about how the approaches and expectations look and feel like for them in daily school life. As a result of this work, behaviour has improved and relationships between staff and children and children and their peers are increasingly positive.

Senior leaders and staff know children well and identify and respond promptly to children's social and emotional needs. All teaching and support staff benefit from professional learning

that helps support them in their understanding of children's behaviours and needs. This includes training around additional support needs, wellbeing, nurture and trauma.

Teachers have effective discussions with children to talk about their wellbeing needs. Staff provide support for children to promote wellbeing. This includes the use of calm spaces, outdoor learning and play therapy. Children are developing well their vocabulary and understanding of emotions and wellbeing. They talk with increased confidence about this. In addition, they are building trust in talking with adults about worries or concerns. All staff now have an increased confidence in approaches to supporting the needs of individual children. As a result of children's needs being supported more effectively, children's relationships and behaviour have greatly improved.

The leadership team should improve approaches to tracking children's attainment and progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels. There is a need for a clear focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school.

Senior leaders and staff have made effective progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders and staff have taken effective steps to improve approaches to tracking children's attainment and progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. They have developed a new system to track more effectively the progress and attainment of all children. Through this system, staff discuss children who are on track to achieve expected levels of attainment, are exceeding expected levels or who need further support. In addition, staff are using this information to plan support for individuals and groups of children. This is having a positive impact on improving the progress of children's learning.

Senior leaders and class teachers meet termly to evaluate the progress of every child in their class. Staff are beginning to set targets to provide realistic and ambitious outcomes for children to achieve in reading, writing and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff review children's progress, evidence of their learning and identify ways to raise attainment further. As a result, teachers are now taking more appropriate action to improve the progress of children's learning.

Senior leaders and staff know their community well and have identified specific children whose progress may be affected by social and economic barriers. Senior leaders provide additional support through a variety of interventions to minimise any impact. As a result of appropriate interventions, children are more engaged and ready to learn. Senior leaders should now evaluate more effectively all interventions used. This will allow them to measure more clearly the impact these are having on closing identified attainment gaps in children's learning.

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 City of Edinburgh Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Fraser Gillan
HM Inspector