

21 May 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Ardgour 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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.

Raise attainment and achievement for all learners, particularly within reading and writing. Across the school, staff should articulate a clear strategy for raising attainment and ensure learning and teaching approaches are planned at the right level of challenge. The strategy should outline support for all learners as well as specific interventions for individual learners as required.

Ardgour Primary School continues to be a warm and welcoming school, where children feel safe and well cared for. Led very effectively by the headteacher, the whole school community works together closely to help the school to continue to improve and grow. Following consultation within the school community, the headteacher and staff have developed a clear strategy for raising attainment. Together, they scrutinise all assessment information available to them to identify promptly any interventions necessary to support children's learning. Where appropriate, teachers set targets for individual children, which are regularly discussed and reviewed with parents. Individual on-line learning profiles have been introduced across the school, and these are popular with children and families. Parents feel these profiles provide helpful information on their child's progress in learning.

The school has made significant progress towards raising attainment and achievement for all. Staff have benefitted from professional learning in order to develop new approaches in the teaching of writing, spelling and reading. These approaches are having a positive impact on children's learning. As a result, attainment in literacy is improving. Across the school, children are making better progress and almost all are on track to achieve or exceed national expectations. Children are enthusiastic about reading. They value the time for personal reading in school each day, and many children read for pleasure at home. Teachers encourage children to read newly published books, to extend their knowledge and understanding of different authors and genres. As a result, children can talk with confidence about a range of authors, and almost all read aloud fluently and with expression. A new approach to develop children's writing skills from nursery to P7 has been successfully introduced. This method is providing children at all stages with better support to generate ideas, and to plan and structure their writing. As a result, children across the school are motivated to write at greater length and to a high standard. They make good use of a toolkit, which helps them to self-assess their work. High quality feedback from teachers helps children to identify what they need to do to improve. Parents are invited into school to see the new approaches to literacy in action.

Staff have reviewed the approaches to teaching numeracy and mathematics. They have taken a well-considered approach to looking nationally for the best programme to suit the context and needs of children in Ardgour Primary. As a result, children are benefitting from regular opportunities to revisit and apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics. During our visit to classes, we observed children across the stages using their numeracy skills to solve a range of problems. As they move through school, they are aware of an increasing range of strategies they can use in their numeracy work.

Continue to develop flexible progression pathways across the curriculum which support teachers to plan learning effectively to ensure children are making the best possible progress.

The headteacher and staff have continued to develop the curriculum for Ardgour Primary School and nursery class. In line with national and local guidance, they have implemented learning pathways for all curricular areas. These pathways are helping to ensure progression in all areas of children's learning as they move through the nursery and school.

Teachers have willingly undertaken training in order to develop and embed Gaelic from P1 to P7. Children's developing knowledge of Gaelic is reinforced well through class routines. Staff have continued to develop the health and wellbeing curriculum in interesting and relevant ways. As a result, children have deeper understanding of their own wellbeing and readiness to learn. There is a clear focus on helping children to develop resilience and confidence. Citizenship continues to be a strong feature of school life, with children in the nursery class now included in the pupil voice committees. Their contributions are welcomed and valued by their older friends and adults alike.

Ensure there is shared understanding across the school of the standards and expectations of what is required to achieve a level of Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers should now use the results of assessment in a more timely manner to plan appropriate interventions to support learning, and monitor the impact of these more regularly.

The headteacher and all staff place great value in participating in professional learning and researching best practice. As a result, staff are implementing new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and this is making a difference for children. Staff are more confident in their professional judgements and are embracing fully the new approaches to teaching and learning. Staff have worked very well together to ensure they have a shared understanding of national standards and expectations. They value regular opportunities to participate in moderation activities with colleagues in local schools, and where possible, further afield. Since the original inspection, they have worked with colleagues in other schools to share standards in literacy and mathematics. As a result, they now have a deeper understanding of what is required to achieve a Curriculum for Excellence level.

Teachers make good use of a variety of sources to assess children's progress in learning. This includes class tests, check-ups, discussions with colleagues and standardised assessments. The headteacher maintains a clear overview of the progress that all children are making in their learning. This strategic approach, combined with teachers' sound knowledge of children, ensures that the headteacher has an accurate view of children's attainment, including those who need additional support. The headteacher provides strong

leadership in ensuring that all staff are developing their professional knowledge and skills in learning, teaching and assessment. Children are making better progress as a result.

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.

Lesley A Johnstone
HM Inspector