

11 February 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

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

Develop clearer leadership, and evaluate better the work of the school to ensure improved outcomes for all children, across the nursery and primary school.

Overall, the school has made a positive start to addressing this area for improvement. However, senior leaders and staff need to improve the pace of development to ensure satisfactory progress is made.

Since the last inspection, the school and nursery have had a period of uncertainty surrounding the leadership of the school. However, a permanent headteacher has been in post since August 2019. She provides much needed stability to the school, and has been successful in beginning to improve the climate for learning. Working with the senior leadership team, the headteacher has put in place a clear action plan, which has begun to address the key areas for development identified as part of the initial inspection.

In the nursery, practitioners have leadership roles that reflect current improvement priorities and the ongoing development of the learning environment. Whilst practitioners consult children increasingly about their learning and changes to the environment, they still need to expand and enhance significantly children's leadership opportunities.

Staff in the primary school feel more fully consulted and included in the process of change. They have started to work well together, with the support of senior leaders, in taking forward areas for development identified in the original inspection report. However, they should develop further children's leadership skills within the classroom, and through their involvement in whole-school improvement activities. Parents would like better communication and more frequent and accurate information on children's progress.

Staff and senior leaders should continue to explore ways to engage parents further in their children's learning. They should use this as a vehicle to increase parental involvement in evaluating the impact of improvements made in the school.

Improve learning, teaching and assessment across the school and nursery, ensuring an appropriate level of pace and challenge. Children should be given opportunities to lead their own learning and be more involved in evaluating their own progress and next steps.

Overall, there has been limited progress across the nursery and primary school in taking forward this area for improvement.

In the nursery, children are happy, motivated and engage in a wider variety of independent learning experiences since the original inspection. Practitioners have started to develop the learning environment better, and children have more opportunities to sustain their interest when playing. They are improving how they plan for children's learning and are becoming more responsive to children's interests. Practitioners understand that this needs time to embed. They should review regularly how their planning and assessment identifies and supports more effectively children's next steps in learning.

Children's experiences in learning, teaching and assessment are not yet consistent and need to improve significantly across the primary school. Senior leaders and teachers need to continue to review their approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure appropriate pace and challenge in all children's learning.

Senior leaders have introduced recently 'learning logs' for children across the school. Teachers are at the early stages of using these effectively to support children to identify targets, gather evidence of progress and identify next steps in their learning. Senior leaders, teachers, parents and children, should develop further the 'learning logs' and agree a clear, shared focus on their purpose. Teachers should share regularly the 'learning logs' with parents to ensure they have a clear understanding of their child's progress and next steps for their learning.

Raise attainment for all children. Approaches to raising attainment should include making effective use of relevant information on children's progress, and robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress in learning and achievement.

Overall, there has been limited progress across the nursery and primary school in taking forward this area for improvement.

Nursery practitioners are beginning to implement improved approaches to assessing and recording children's progress, which is beginning to provide practitioners with information to support children's learning. They should now improve further the tracking and monitoring of children's progress to support children better to make the best possible progress in their learning.

Senior leaders use, with developing confidence, systems to gather data on children's attainment across the primary school. They are at the early stages in using data to track rigorously children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They now need to use this information more effectively to track children's progress across learning. Teachers should ensure that judgements made about children's progress are more reliable and robust. They need to gather information that provides an accurate account of children's progress over time.

Staff and partners are beginning to increase the range of clubs and activities for children. Senior leaders should now track and monitor children's participation and the skills they are developing to ensure they are given opportunities for achievement which are appropriate to their needs and aspirations.

Develop a curriculum that is relevant to the whole school's context. This should support children in the nursery and primary school to make progress and develop appropriate knowledge and skills as they move through the school.

Overall, the school has made a positive start to addressing this area for improvement. However, senior leaders and staff need to improve the pace of development to ensure satisfactory progress is made.

Practitioners in the nursery have made progress in improving opportunities to develop children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Access to a wider range of resources including natural materials and everyday items is supporting the development of creativity and curiosity in children's play. Children's access daily to outdoor play is supporting their health and wellbeing as well as their management of risk. Practitioners should work closely with staff in the primary school to develop learning pathways that provide improved continuity and progression in children's learning.

In the primary school, staff are beginning to plan more flexibly and imaginatively to deliver a relevant curriculum for children. In all classes, children are beginning to experience a broader and more balanced curriculum. Staff should continue to monitor the impact of curricular programmes to ensure children have more breadth, challenge and application in their learning. This should enable all children to make the best possible progress. Staff need to undertake further work to help children understand better the skills they are learning, and how these can be applied in learning, life and work.

What happens next?

The school and nursery have made a positive start to addressing the areas for improvement identified during the initial inspection. However, they need to undertake further work to ensure satisfactory progress is made across all areas for improvement. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Scottish Borders Council the details of this inspection.

Dennise Sommerville
HM Inspector