

14 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2019, HM Inspectors published a letter on Millbank Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Moray 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.

**Develop more strategic leadership at all levels within the school and in doing so strengthen the use of self-evaluation processes which leads to an increased rate of change and improved outcomes for all children.**

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in staffing. Led by the headteacher and her leadership team, staff have made positive steps to improve the work of the school and to increase the pace of change. Teachers are starting to engage more readily with national guidance and self-evaluation frameworks, such as *How good is our school?* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) (2015). The leadership team and staff are collaborating and consulting with parents and children to bring about change. This will help them to make more effective judgements about standards and outcomes for children. The school should continue to maintain this brisker pace of change.

The strategic leadership of The Bothy and the inclusion of children with additional support requires further improvement. The school has increased the number of provisions that are available to meet the needs of children. These include 'The Bridge', support for learning, The Bothy and Pupil Equity Fund groups. There is significant overlap for children who currently benefit from each of these different provisions. The school now needs to agree, clarify and communicate effectively the rationale of each of these supports. A next step is to ensure that children, parents and staff have a common understanding of the different support approaches, so that children's needs are being appropriately met. The school would also benefit from having a clear system for identifying children who would benefit most from these interventions. Senior leaders and staff should strive to ensure that children can be well supported and included in classes, wherever possible. At present, too many support interventions are dependent upon children being extracted from their class.

**Staff should work collaboratively to ensure children experience consistently high quality learning, teaching and assessment which provides an appropriate level of pace and challenge in children's learning. Children should be given opportunities to lead their own learning and be more involved in evaluating their own progress and next steps.**

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. New planning formats agreed with staff are supporting teachers to plan across stages. Newly developed approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy are beginning to provide consistency in

teachers' approaches. As a result, learning and teaching has improved in the majority of classes. It is important that the pace of change is increased through ongoing professional learning and collegiate working, to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to make the best possible progress. Teachers should continue to work together to develop a clear understanding of the principles of assessment. The school values the helpful support of the local authority in implementing a new tracking system. Senior leaders are beginning to use this system to discuss with class teachers children's progress in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. This is helping staff to monitor more effectively the progress of different groups of learners.

Staff in The Bothy have begun to work together more effectively to meet the needs of children, by providing them with improved, better-planned learning opportunities. They are planning activities that are well matched to children's needs, using appropriate materials and allocating adult support to enable children to achieve. Teachers are now more involved in planning learning for children in The Bothy and this is leading to more meaningful learning experiences. Teaching staff in The Bothy should ensure that alternative plans are in place for each child, should the scheduled learning activity not go according to plan. All staff should be aware of these plans and what their role is in delivering them. Further work remains to be done to ensure that the assessment of children's progress in The Bothy is more rigorous.

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

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. A majority of children across the school are now on track to achieve appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels for literacy and numeracy. Teachers are increasing the robustness and accuracy of their professional judgements. As a result, the majority of children are now making better progress from prior levels of attainment than before. The progress of children in identified groups is now being tracked more carefully. The school should ensure, particularly at the early level, that teachers continue to focus on raising attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.

Staff in The Bothy have been improving how they assess children's progress. The targets set in individualised educational programmes (IEPs) are now more meaningful, appropriate and achievable for children. An important next step for staff is to develop an appropriate tracking and monitoring approach, to ensure that each child's progress over time can be more accurately measured.

**Implement revised approaches to health and wellbeing and inclusion to better support children's wellbeing and progress. In doing so, ensure all staff and children know, understand and use the wellbeing indicators as an integral feature of school life.**

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. A new programme for health and wellbeing is in place to ensure that all aspects of health and wellbeing are taught over time. As yet, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this approach on improving outcomes for children's wellbeing. The wellbeing indicators are becoming a more consistent feature of the school. Staff use the wellbeing indicators to track children's

progress in wellbeing. Children are able to discuss their understanding of their own wellbeing using 'wellbeing webs'.

The school has identified that further provision for children with wellbeing needs is required. It has recently implemented The Bridge, to meet the needs of children who need support with their wellbeing. Overall, staff take a nurturing approach. The development of this provision is at an early stage. More thought needs to be given to the criteria for inclusion in The Bridge, so that children can benefit fully from their time there.

The children who attend The Bothy begin each day in their mainstream class with their peers. They join their classes for some areas of learning, such as art. However, most children who have places in The Bothy still spend relatively little time included in mainstream classes. Staff across the school should continue, with support, to explore ways in which these children could be more regularly supported to learn with their peers.

**Develop progressive curriculum pathways for all curriculum areas which are relevant to the school's context, and which offer children opportunities to develop appropriate knowledge and skills.**

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. All teachers have begun to use numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English progression frameworks to plan learning. A next step is to ensure these progression pathways are used and applied effectively to lead to improved attainment for all children.

Senior leaders have identified the need to develop further the curriculum rationale for the school. There is a need for staff to plan learning experiences in an integrated way, that ensures all children receive a meaningful, broad general education that has the highest expectations for every child.

Staff in The Bothy have worked hard to improve the curriculum offered to children. They now plan in the same format as the rest of the school. Visual timetables have been introduced, which help children to stay on task and focused on their work.

### What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings we identified areas where improvements are still required. In light of the current circumstances, we will liaise with Moray Council to discuss our findings and support for the school. We will provide you with an update on next steps once the school has reopened.

Sue Williams  
HM Inspector