

23 April 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2020, HM Inspectors published a letter on Lawfield Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Midlothian Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in March 2023. 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 children's attainment across the nursery and primary school.

Senior leaders have taken important steps to improve staff's understanding and use of attainment data. Staff's effective partnership working with Midlothian's Raising Attainment Team is supporting them to develop appropriate strategies to raise attainment. The strategies implemented by senior leaders to improve children's attendance are leading to improvement, enabling children to engage more frequently in learning activities. However, significant changes in staffing and high levels of staff absence have impacted on the pace of progress and improvement across the school and nursery. Although very limited progress has been made to raise the overall levels of children's attainment, there are early indications that progress is beginning to be made.

Staff introduced Midlothian Council's new data dashboard, and literacy and numeracy progression planners this session. Staff's confidence in the use of data is increasing and they are beginning to use this data to plan next steps in learning. Teachers' understanding of national standards is beginning to improve through their engagement in moderation activities with colleagues from other schools. Teachers are now being better supported to review children's progress with increasing clarity through engaging in regular progress and attainment meetings with senior leaders.

Staff have undertaken significant review of literacy and numeracy resources, and new reading materials have been purchased. This is enabling staff to plan and deliver learning activities more effectively. Staff's implementation of new programmes to improve attainment in reading has had limited impact. Staff require further professional learning and clearer guidance to ensure these contribute to raising children's attainment.

Practitioners should review further the use of the nursery playroom environment and outdoor space to ensure they motivate children sufficiently to progress in their learning.

Ensure children benefit from consistently high-quality learning and teaching, which includes increasing opportunities for children to lead their own learning.

Senior leaders have demonstrated a relentless focus on improving the climate for learning across the school. They recognised the need to improve relationships across the school and to increase a significant number of children's readiness to learn. They have taken successful steps to address these issues. Staff are now well-placed to increase the focus on ensuring the provision of high-quality learning and teaching.

Senior leaders, supported very well by local authority officers, have taken forward significant improvements to the way nurture is promoted across the school. The organisation of the enhanced class has been improved. Staff now ensure that learning within the enhanced class is more aligned with children's main classwork. As a result, a significant number of children accessing the enhanced class now benefit from very effective support. There are early indications that this new approach is having a very positive impact on these children's emotional wellbeing and learning. All children who access nurture support now spend more extended periods of time in their own classes. Children have a more positive attitude to learning and display greater resilience in classes. Across the school, staff provide a soft start to the day which supports children to settle to learning more quickly. Staff's introduction of calm learning zones within each atrium provides children with easy access to a quiet and relaxing space.

Children engage well in their learning in the majority of classes. The majority of teachers share the purpose of learning with children at the start of lessons. They also share with children how to be successful. Children are beginning to be involved in reviewing their learning but would benefit from more opportunities for reflection. Staff across the school are becoming increasingly reflective of their own practice. They demonstrate an enthusiasm in improving learning and teaching. Senior leaders should continue to develop further staff's understanding and use of the 'Lawfield Way' to ensure all children experience consistently high-quality learning.

At the early level, staff are improving the ways they promote learning through play. They have significantly improved the spaces both in the atrium and classrooms. As a result, children now engage in play-based activities in a more suitable environment. This enables them to access more appropriate resources to be curious and creative. Children now have increased opportunities to lead their own learning.

Staff now plan learning in a more streamlined and focused way. Their new approach to planning takes better account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks. Their plans provide greater clarity about what children are expected to learn and how this will be assessed. Staff's use of the new Midlothian progression pathways is supporting children to build on prior learning more effectively.

Improve assessment approaches across the primary stages. Ensure all teaching staff use information gathered from children's learning and assessment activity more effectively to plan learning experiences which meet the needs of all children.

Staff employ assessment approaches across the primary classes that are now more cohesive and integral to the planning of learning and teaching. Senior leaders and teachers capture information about children's progress more effectively. Staff across the primary stages continue to implement and embed the 'inclusive learning, teaching and assessment policy'. Staff's increasing understanding of this consistent approach across the school

supports the use of both formative and summative assessment to evidence children's progress. Children are beginning to talk about their learning and what they need to do to succeed. Staff engage in regular meetings that focus better on moderating standards through robust evidence gathering of children's achievements in their learning. This is beginning to impact positively on teacher's professional judgement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Senior leaders have prioritised the provision of high-quality universal support and targeted support for all children across the primary stages based on an assessment of needs. Teacher's understanding of strategies to support children with social and emotional barriers to learning has improved. The majority of teachers have improved their classroom environment. As a result, more children benefit from safer, nurturing classroom environments where they can enjoy uninterrupted learning. Staff should continue to monitor and develop a cohesive approach to the removal of barriers to learning based on ongoing assessment. They should ensure the provision of well-planned interventions that lead to positive outcomes for all children across the school and nursery.

Overall, staff have made a very positive start to improving assessment and meeting the needs of children. They should continue to build on the work undertaken this session, ensuring that effective assessment accurately informs planned learning to meet the needs of all learners.

Further aspects of school improvement.

As a result of the skilful leadership of the acting headteacher, an improved ethos and culture are evident across the school. This strong leadership has led to significant progress being made to improve children's behaviour, relationships and the learning environment. The physical environment of the school has also improved. Children are proud to see their work displayed for others to enjoy through attractive wall displays now evident in corridors. School assemblies have been re-established. The acting headteacher has ensured that effective systems and processes are in place to support a wide range of aspects of the school's work.

In consultation with local authority officers, the acting headteacher has identified a reduced number of key priorities for improvement. They have provided staff with increased clarity about improvement priorities, and this is supporting an increasing pace of change. Communication across the staff team is improving. Building on this very positive start, senior leaders should now review and improve the approaches used to communicate with parents/carers. It will be important for a permanently appointed headteacher to sustain this pace of progress.

What happens next?

The school is beginning to make progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Midlothian Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. 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 Midlothian Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Pamela Adamson
HM Inspector