

12 December 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Port Erroll School and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council**

In August 2016, HM Inspectors published a letter following the inspection of your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher, staff and officers of the Council. We heard from the headteacher, other staff and officers 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. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

Increase the pace of developing the curriculum to ensure appropriate progression and depth in learning.

When planning children's curricular experiences, teachers now focus more on progression in learning and take greater account of children's interests. Teachers continue to use Aberdeenshire Council's programmes of study along with the benchmarks for literacy and numeracy which support progression in children's learning in all curricular areas. They report that these help them to plan and develop children's skills more effectively. Children's experiences in literacy and numeracy are having a positive impact on raising attainment at a few stages in the school. The school continues to develop children's skills for learning, life and work. As a matter of priority, the curriculum vision and rationale needs to be refreshed to guide learning, teaching and assessment. The headteacher and staff now need to engage in further discussions around choice and differentiation. There have been positive developments to support planning pathways across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. There is scope to start planning for transition earlier in the school session for those moving from nursery to P1. This will support the continuity in learning better for children making this move. In curricular areas other than English language and mathematics, staff need to improve the way they plan learning at the primary stages to ensure that tasks and activities are well matched to individual and group learning needs.

Better meet the needs of individual learners and work in collaboration with children, parents and partners to identify next steps in learning.

There is evidence of greater partnership working with other agencies to meet the individual needs of children across the primary stages. This now needs to be extended to include children in the nursery class. Support plans are in place for most children who require them and these are now monitored and evaluated more regularly. The school should continue with the improvements in working together with children, parents and partners to identify next steps in learning. The school now needs to ensure that all individual plans include appropriate learning targets that reflect children's identified support needs. In most lessons observed, learning tasks and activities could have been more clearly matched to children's learning needs. Staff across the school would benefit from more advice on strategies and approaches to meet the learning and emotional needs of children. A significant number of children feel that bullying is not dealt with effectively and do not feel safe and secure. As a result, we have asked Aberdeenshire Council to support the school in making improvements in this area.

Develop robust systems of self-evaluation that lead to well-paced change, consistently high-quality learners' experiences and improved outcomes for learners.

The school is developing approaches to improving the reliability of information about children's progress, through discussion about achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. Teachers at the primary stages have taken part in moderation activities to help ensure that they have a clearer understanding of expectations and standards. These approaches require further development so that teachers have greater confidence in their judgements about how well children are progressing in line with national expectations. There still remains scope to improve the pace of children's progress in numeracy and literacy across the school.

Nursery staff have made good progress in taking forward key areas for improvement. This includes changes to the learning environment and children's experiences. Within the primary classes, approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school should continue to develop to ensure they bring about improvements to learning and teaching. Overall, there has not been sufficient progress made in this area across the school and nursery. There is still a continuing need to have a more systematic and shared approach to gathering evidence about what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. Overall, there is a need to strengthen the leadership and direction of the school.

What happens next?

With support from the local authority, the headteacher and all staff now need to work effectively together to increase the pace of improvement and improve approaches to team work which is required at Port Erroll Primary School. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Aberdeenshire 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.

Guch Dhillon
HM Inspector

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