

1 July 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Lockerbie Primary School and Nursery Class, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Lockerbie Primary School and Nursery Class in November 2021. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

Supporting children and families through COVID-19

The school experienced a period of unsettled leadership prior to COVID-19 restrictions and through to December 2020. This was as a result of senior leadership changes. During periods of lockdown the school was used as a childcare hub and staff volunteered to support this.

The current headteacher took up post in January 2021. She has brought about a more settled period of leadership, which the school community is benefitting from. Together with staff and practitioners in the nursery class, they ensured that children's health and wellbeing remained central to their engagement with each other, children and families throughout times of further lockdown and periods of remote learning.

During the second period of national lockdown, staff and practitioners provided digital learning at home for children and worked hard to ensure they received a variety of learning experiences each week. Staff and practitioners used new strategies to respond quickly to any worries and concerns children and families had.

COVID-19 impacted on the Learning Centre significantly. Staff engaged effectively with a range of partners to prioritise and develop approaches to wellbeing and support for families. This included regular phone calls home and doorstep visits. Families appreciated this, especially as many wider support and respite services were suspended. For many families, the link with the Learning Centre was their only support in challenging and worrying times.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Almost all children are respectful, polite and proud of their school. Children shared their thoughts and observations freely and confidently with HM Inspectors in focus groups. They remarked that teachers care for them, and they are delighted to be back in school.

Since the last inspection, school staff have worked closely with local authority staff to improve learning, teaching and assessment. However, changes school leadership have made carrying out these improvements complex and inconsistent and staff have not overtaken the set priorities for improvement. COVID-19 mitigations and staff absence have had a negative impact on how well, and how quickly, improvements in learning, teaching and assessment have been made.

All staff must continue to improve their understanding of effective learning and teaching. The headteacher has correctly identified this. Teachers do not always make the purpose of lessons and what is expected of children clear. Consequently, children's learning experiences do not meet their needs well enough yet. Staff have taken part in professional learning to support this improvement, but this professional learning is variable, and has not yet improved the quality of learning and teaching.

Improvement in assessment and moderation is taking place slowly, most staff have made improvement in how they work together. The headteacher is providing support and guidance to staff and recognises further work to improve assessment and moderation is needed. This will ensure a greater shared depth of understanding and consistent application.

As a result of the work of practitioners and local authority staff, leadership of learning, teaching and assessment is better in the early years setting. They have improved the balance of child-led and adult-initiated learning to promote children's interests and curiosity. Dialogue between practitioners and children enhances the quality and depth of learning.

Ensuring that children develop a broad range of skills, including those needed for greater learner participation has been particularly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, little progress has been made. A few children work with the senior management team to undertake responsibilities in the school library and in class-to-class activities.

Not enough progress has been made in improving attainment as yet. COVID-19 guidance and mitigations meant many activities were curtailed. The headteacher is confident, and HM Inspectors agree, that the school's attainment figures in literacy and numeracy are becoming more accurate due to greater staff awareness of progression through a level. Teacher's professional learning is helping to improve progress in reading and numeracy. However, teachers need to make sure that these approaches are sustainable and suitable for all children, and take account of children's wellbeing needs.

Learning Centre

There is a lack of clarity in the overall governance, roles and responsibilities of senior leaders in the Learning Centre and school. The governance of the Learning Centre needs to be reviewed alongside current policies to ensure that staff are clear in their roles. Staff have undertaken some of the improvement we asked for in our last inspection, but the impact of COVID-19 means that there are other areas which have still not improved.

Staff and children have positive relationships in the majority of classes. Staff are improving how they engage children in activities and listen to what children say they need. Staff have developed an 'All about me' profile which has helped this. The profile contains clear information on the most effective ways to support children's individual needs. Children are

not receiving their full entitlement across all curricular areas. Senior leaders, supported by the local authority, should now act on this.

Staff need to develop the Learning Centre Curriculum. They should ensure national guidance is followed, and planning for children's progress is developed. Improvements in literacy and numeracy should be built upon. As planned, the leadership team should continue to seek the views of pupils, parents and partners.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are prioritising their plans to support recovery. As a result, the school needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will also carry out another visit to the school within one year of the publication of this letter. When we carry out another visit, we will write to you informing you of the progress the school has made.

Shona Taylor
HM Inspector