

12 November 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Milltimber Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeen City 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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

### **Improve leadership of change to raise attainment and achievement of all children in the school and nursery class.**

The revised remit of the depute headteacher has enhanced leadership of the nursery. With significant support from the local authority, staff have improved the nursery learning environment and outdoor area. Staff are beginning to improve their approach to planning learning and senior leaders have begun to monitor children's progress. Moving forward, the leadership team should continue to develop staff skills further in how they monitor and evaluate the work of the nursery.

Staff are more involved in school improvement activities. They are responding positively to increased opportunities to lead and participate in groups to help improve the school. The headteacher should provide clearer direction to the working groups to ensure maximum impact and increased pace of change.

Children are provided with leadership opportunities through their involvement in pupil committees, the school house system and 'Life and Ethos' groups. Participation in Aberdeen City's 'Young Inspectors' programme has enabled a few children to engage in training using 'How good is OUR school'. Staff should now build on this positive start by continuing to increase the role of children in school improvement.

The leadership team have established an annual plan to gather a range of information on the work of the school. Senior leaders have a clearer overview of children's attainment and wider achievement. Staff have engaged with professional learning and work with other schools to develop a deeper understanding of the Curriculum for Excellence levels. Further work is required to ensure this approach is used more fully.

The school benefits from many parents who are positive about supporting school improvement by sharing their skills. Further work is required to ensure this is used more fully to secure improvement. Senior leaders should improve further the school's approaches to communicating with parents, particularly in relation to how the needs of children requiring additional support are met.

**Develop learning, teaching and assessment, including approaches to planning taking account of up-to-date national guidance and research.**

The planning of learning in the nursery has improved. It now better matches children's interests. As a result, children are more engaged in their learning. Building on this positive start, staff should develop further their focus on planning for learning to ensure it meets the needs of all children. Staff have made an early start to improving how they use observations of learning to assess children's progress. They should continue to develop this more fully.

Approaches to assessment for learning have improved. The effective use of a range of assessment strategies are supporting children well. Children have a clearer understanding of what they are learning and how they know that they have been successful.

The introduction of local authority progression frameworks across all curriculum areas is supporting staff in helping children build on their previous learning as they move through the school. Staff are developing a better understanding of national expectations of children's attainment due to shared planning within the school and with other schools. Staff now plan learning and assessment together to better effect.

**Review the recent developments to the curriculum to ensure that all areas are covered on a regular basis and continue to develop frameworks to support breadth and progression.**

In the nursery, progress has been made on improving opportunities to develop communication and early language and early numeracy and mathematics. Children have increased access to resources and a range of materials to promote creativity in their play. Daily opportunities to engage in outdoor learning is beginning to improve. Across the school and nursery, children have improved opportunities to develop their skills in digital learning. Nursery staff now need to build on the early start to improving the curriculum to ensure that all children experience a broad curriculum.

Staff across the school have made a limited start to improving the curriculum. A working group has reviewed the school's three-year overview to ensure appropriate coverage of experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. The use of local authority progression pathways to support all curriculum areas has been introduced. The leadership team should provide clearer guidance and support to staff on how they should provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum. This will help support staff to ensure children build on their previous learning effectively as they move through the school.

## **Review approaches to meeting the needs of children who require additional support to enable better outcomes for all children.**

Staff in the nursery know children well and have made an early start to improving how individuals are challenged and supported. Improved personal planning is enabling staff to have more up-to-date information on children's needs and interests. Staff have good relationships with parents and the school has in place a few formal and informal ways parents and staff share information on children's social, emotional and learning needs. All children are happy in the nursery and play for sustained periods of time. Nursery staff need to ensure the formal identification of needs and recording of short-term targets secure improved outcomes for learners. This process should be undertaken in partnership with parents.

The school has made a promising start to developing a range of approaches to meet the needs of children who require additional support. A range of training has been provided and the role of the Support for Learning Teacher has recently been introduced. Driven forward by the additional support needs working group, support for learning bases have been created. A team of parents now support children with reading on a regular basis. With funding from the Parent Teacher Association, 'Boost Bases' have been introduced in all areas of the school. These provide a range of resources to better support children in their learning.

Senior leaders should continue to review how they gather and track information to ensure the needs of learners are met promptly. This will help address concerns raised by some parents so that the school is more proactive in the early identification of needs.

Overall, the pace of improvement needs to increase. Many of the developments made in relation to improving the school's approaches to meeting the needs of children requiring additional support for learning are at a very early stage of development. The school needs more time to implement fully these initiatives.

### **What happens next?**

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Aberdeen City 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 Aberdeen City 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.

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HM Inspector