

27 February 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2022, HM Inspectors published a letter on Cardenden Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Fife 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.

Establish effective approaches to evaluate the quality of the school's work. This should inform and support the headteacher and staff to prioritise and plan improvements across the school and nursery.

Senior leaders have established effective approaches to evaluating the quality of the school's work.

Representatives from Fife Council acted promptly following the original inspection and continue to work closely with the school and nursery. A new senior leadership team are in place and council representatives are very supportive of the new acting headteacher and acting depute headteacher. The acting headteacher and acting depute headteacher are strong leaders and are making a measurable difference to the climate and ethos in all areas of the school. They model very high standards and are highly attuned to children's needs throughout the day. As a result, leadership for change across the school and nursery is improving continuously. Senior leaders recognise the worth of every child and demonstrate kindness and compassion for all. They expect the same from all adults who work across the school and nursery. Overall, children now learn in a calm respectful ethos where they feel valued.

The acting headteacher in consultation with staff, children and parents refreshed the school values of respect, kindness and ambition with the school community. These values are now embedded across the school and staff refer to them regularly in playrooms and classrooms. Senior leaders and staff use the values well in supporting children's improved behaviour, positive relationships and are beginning to raise expectations.

Senior leaders have created a helpful quality assurance calendar of activity designed to address all of the areas for improvement set at the original inspection. They have set the pace of this appropriately to enable staff to undertake professional learning. This is helping to make sure any changes are applied consistently and with rigour across the school and nursery.

Senior leaders have put in place effective systematic approaches to self-evaluation which are evolving over time. These approaches are very well documented and enable staff to see that their hard work is having a measurable impact across the school and nursery. Parents are consulted about all the changes senior leaders make to ensure they are part of establishing

an improved culture for learning. Senior leaders know every child, their progress and needs. As a result, they provide clear direction for all staff to ensure all are focussed on the outcomes for children.

Improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure a consistently high quality for all children across the school.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment have improved.

Senior leaders, supported by local authority officers, have provided a greater strategic direction to ensure consistent learning, teaching and assessment approaches. Staff continue to take part in supportive professional learning activities within the school and with the Fife Professional Learning Team. This is helping to establish a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching. Senior leaders and staff created a 'Staff Handbook'. Their use of the handbook is beginning to ensure a more consistent approach to the structure and delivery of lessons and activities.

Senior leaders and staff have reviewed and redeveloped learning environments to ensure that all playrooms, classrooms and learning spaces are now attractive and welcoming for children. They have enhanced learning walls and class and corridor displays to support and motivate children to learn and achieve. Staff have made an initial start to incorporating play at early and first level. Children spend time each day participating in 'learning through play' sessions. Senior leaders and staff should continue to ensure their approach offers sufficient challenge and progression for all children. They can do this through continually reflecting on the principles of national practice guidance. Most children benefit from more regular, planned outdoor learning. This is leading to improvements in children's engagement in learning.

Senior leaders have made a positive start to developing staff's confidence in the use of assessment information to confirm children's progress in achieving Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Senior leaders engage staff in regular planning and tracking meetings which are beginning to help to inform teacher's professional judgement. Senior leaders and teachers recognise that, while there have been improvements in staff's confidence, professional judgements are not yet reliable or robust. Senior leaders are developing a useful bespoke monitoring and tracking systems to monitor attainment and progress of children in literacy and numeracy. This system will also allow staff to monitor the effectiveness of targeted interventions and the progress of identified individuals and groups of children.

Improve approaches to meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of all children including those who require additional support for learning.

Approaches to meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of all children have improved.

Children now benefit from positive, nurturing and supportive relationships across the school and nursery. Senior leaders and staff have significantly reduced the number of behaviour related incidents during the school day. There are now very few incidents. Staff across the school have undertaken professional learning which enables them to understand and manage children's behaviour in their playrooms and classrooms.

Senior leaders and nursery practitioners work closely together to ensure all children have appropriate plans in place to meet statutory requirements. They have incorporated children in the nursery into the whole school tracking overview. This is enabling the acting headteacher to keep a close check on children's wellbeing and learning needs.

Staff now use nurturing approaches universally with consistency and understanding. These approaches are underpinning children's sense of pride and achievements. Staff take time to talk to children about their wellbeing. They have created attractive and carefully resourced safe and quiet spaces for children to work and rest. As a result, children feel respected and trusted.

Senior leaders have significantly improved the approaches to meeting the needs of children who need extra help to learn. They work closely with staff, children and their parents to ensure plans with agreed and measurable targets are in place with appropriate resources where required. Senior leaders now evaluate children's progress and adjust plans as necessary. Children are making much better progress.

Improve children's learning experiences, progress and attainment across all areas of the curriculum, particularly in reading, writing, numeracy and mathematics.

Children's learning experiences, progress and aspects of attainment are beginning to improve.

Senior leaders are developing a comprehensive tracking system which is improving how they gather and use data to understand better children's attainment. The acting headteacher and staff team need to continue to develop approaches to gathering data on children's progress. This should accurately indicate how well children are attaining over time. Senior leaders and staff should ensure rigour in using this data to inform interventions and to support raised attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Teachers' professional judgement about children's progress is becoming more accurate as a result of undertaking professional learning. As teaching staff develop their skills in assessing children's achievement of a CfE level, their data will become more robust and based on sound evaluative evidence.

Children's progress at first and second levels in aspects of literacy and numeracy is showing signs of improvement. Across all stages, as planned, staff need to share a more consistent whole school approach to developing and improving children's progress in reading and writing. Children's attainment in reading and writing continues to be below national expectations. Senior leaders need to continue to support teachers to plan how they will address the gaps in children's literacy skills.

What happens next?

The school has made significant progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within one year of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the

improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Fife Council that we intend to take.

Shona ES Taylor
HM Inspector