

11 September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

**Applegrove Primary School
The Moray Council**

In June 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The Moray 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 school needs to take a more rigorous and focussed approach to self-evaluation, quality assurance and improvement planning

The headteacher and leadership team have worked well with the local authority to establish a more rigorous and regular approach to evaluating the work of the school. There is now a clearer plan to improve the school. Staff and children are more involved in deciding on changes across the school. Staff have enthusiastically taken on leadership opportunities to develop areas further. There is a clearer approach to monitoring the quality of the work of the school. Staff have visited other schools and are working well together to raise expectations of what children can achieve. The leadership team now gathers views from parents, children and staff on the quality of its work. They use information from this to identify areas for improvement. The recent refresh to the vision, values and aims engaged parents, children and staff fully in the process.

The Principal Teacher (PT) of Additional Support for Learning (PT Additional Support Needs) continues to make very good use of local and national advice and research to develop approaches to support learners in the 'Wee Room' and across the school. As a result, provision for children in the 'Wee Room' continues to be strong.

Raise attainment and achievement of children, particularly in literacy and numeracy

The school is developing a clearer picture of the progress children are making in their learning. A whole-school tracking system has been developed in partnership with the local authority and the PT (Additional Support Needs). She has worked well with the acting Depute Headteacher to support staff in analysing information gathered. Staff now regularly collate information on children's progress in learning against national benchmarks. Class teachers and the senior leadership team regularly discuss children's progress. This is beginning to provide useful information that teachers are now using to raise attainment. Helpfully the data for each class is displayed in floor books. These are used effectively as working documents to evidence progress throughout the year. A range of strategies has been used to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. However, although attainment shows some improvement, it is not yet sufficiently high enough. Recent changes to the teaching of numeracy in all classes should help raise attainment over time. The school has recently been included in the Highland Literacy project which should support improved attainment in literacy over time.

Further develop approaches to assessment and agreeing of standards to effectively track children's progress with their learning

Teachers have begun to improve approaches to assessing children's progress in learning. These have the potential to help staff show improvement in children's work more clearly. National Benchmarks are increasingly being built into teachers' learning plans. These are supporting teachers to make more confident judgements about children's progress in learning. Staff now need to continue to develop approaches to assessment that are linked to the planned learning and rely less on formal tests.

Increase leadership opportunities for staff, children and parents in taking forward school improvement priorities

Staff are embracing leadership opportunities to help improve the school further. Staff working groups have led improvements to planning for progression in literacy, numeracy and technologies. They now have more say and are more involved in improving the school. The acting Depute Headteacher has led on key areas including a review of the school's vision and values with the school council. The PT (Additional Support Needs) is the lead for tracking and monitoring of attainment. A number of staff lead on key areas including Literacy, Numeracy and Technologies. All teaching staff currently belong to one of the Literacy, Numeracy or Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) working groups, taking forward improvement work in these areas. A number of children are Rights Respecting School Ambassadors and have recently led the school application for the Bronze Award. Learners, working with the Parent Council have led the review of homework and spelling. The Health Committee has led a campaign to encourage more children to bring fruit for snack. House Captains now have a developing role in gathering pupil views on school improvement and leading celebration assemblies. Staff should now build on this good start to develop the leadership of children across the school

much further. There is still a need to improve the opportunities for children to be more involved in leading their own learning.

Ensure learning activities have appropriate pace and challenge for all children. More innovative approaches to learning and teaching should be encouraged and shared across the school

The environment and climate for learning across almost all classes is positive and respectful, with most children appropriately motivated and eager to learn. Staff have developed the Applegrove Learning Cycle to identify what excellent learning, teaching and assessment looks like. This should help develop more consistency in learning and teaching across classes over time. Staff are working well together to support learners, enhance practice and extend their own professional learning. Teachers across the school work well together to plan learning, teaching and assessment. There is a need to continue to develop how well staff challenge learners and improve the pace of learning in classes. There is an urgent need for progression pathways in all curricular areas to support staff to help children build on their learning as they progress through the school. Staff across the school should now focus all activities to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.

What happens next?

The school has made progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress from The Moray Council 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 The Moray Council that we intend to take.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.