

23 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In October 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Letham Primary School and Nursery Class (known as the Early Childhood Centre). The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Perth and Kinross 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.

Since the initial inspection, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership teams in the school and early childhood centre (ECC). Following the original inspection, the deputy headteacher took up the post of acting headteacher until April 2019, when a new permanent headteacher was appointed. During this period, the acting headteacher led the whole staff team through a brisk and successful period of very positive change. She provided strong and strategic leadership and created detailed and well-considered action plans to address the main areas for improvement as outlined in the initial inspection. The new headteacher continued and supported very effectively the school's improvement journey. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and are now supported by a new acting deputy headteacher and new ECC lead to enable further improvements within the school and ECC.

The school leadership team should work with the staff team to ensure consistently high quality learning and teaching at all stages. In doing so, ensure there is appropriate pace and challenge in all lessons.

The ECC and school have made very good progress in addressing this area for improvement.

Senior leaders have taken very positive steps to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the ECC. As a result of professional learning opportunities and supportive school frameworks, practitioners now interact with children in a more skilful way. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in most children's levels of engagement. Children are happy, settled and motivated in their learning and respond to the positive ethos in the ECC. Importantly, children are becoming more independent and making choices and decisions about their learning in meaningful ways.

In the last 18 months, senior leaders and teachers have maintained a relentless focus on ensuring high quality learning and teaching consistently, at all primary stages. They have taken positive action to achieve this. The whole school community worked well together to refresh the school's vision, values and aims and to develop high expectations to promote positive relationships. The new vision, values and aims are promoting high aspirations for children across the whole school community. Senior leaders, in collaboration with the staff team have developed a helpful learning and teaching framework which ensures all teaching

staff have a shared understanding of the main features of high-quality learning and teaching. This detailed framework, along with robust approaches to improve children's experiences, has led to greater consistency in learning and teaching and experiences that are better matched to children's needs. Children are now clearer on the purpose of their learning and contribute effectively to their steps for success. Importantly, senior leaders and staff have developed effective supports to help children self-regulate. This approach has improved significantly children's behaviour across the school. There is now a calm, purposeful environment which is helping to promote effective learning. Senior leaders encourage and support staff to work together more effectively. Teachers now plan with their stage partners and identify ways of assessing children's progress at the start of the learning blocks. Across the school, children are now involved effectively in the planning and reviewing of their learning.

Raise attainment and achievement for children to ensure children are achieving appropriate standards in literacy and numeracy.

The ECC and school have made very good progress in addressing this area for improvement.

Across all aspects of the work of the primary school and ECC, there is a strengthened focus on raising the attainment and achievement of all children. Overall, children in the EEC are making much better progress in literacy and numeracy. The EEC lead has supported practitioners to develop literacy and numeracy rich learning environments. This work is having a very positive impact on children's progress in literacy and numeracy. A significant number of children are making better progress as a result of their participation in dedicated group work for literacy, numeracy and social communication. The ECC lead has taken positive action with teachers and practitioners to check the progress of children in line with the rest of the school.

Children's attainment and achievement is improving at all stages in the primary school. Overall, most children are now expected to achieve appropriate levels in listening and talking and the majority are expected to achieve appropriate levels in reading, writing and numeracy. This is a considerable improvement since the original inspection. Of particular note, is children's increased attainment at the early stages. Senior leaders have developed a rigorous approach to capturing and analysing assessment data. They now have a clear picture of children's attainment at all stages. Teachers meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss children's progress. Using these meetings, they are able to identify effectively where targeted interventions are required. Since the original inspection, senior leaders have established a more streamlined approach to providing targeted support for specific children. Senior leaders and teachers measure carefully the impact of any interventions on children's attainment and achievement.

Teachers now deliver a consistent approach to the teaching and assessment of writing and make effective use of their expectations for listening and talking. As planned, teachers should continue to embed new approaches to teaching writing in order to ensure children make the best possible progress. They have also engaged well in visits to other schools to identify highly-effective practice in, for example, raising attainment in numeracy. As a result, children are making better progress in numeracy and mathematics.

Continue to make improvements to the curriculum to ensure all children make continuous progress across the broad general education.

The ECC and school have made very good progress in addressing this area for improvement.

Senior leaders have worked well with children, staff and parents to refresh and update the ECC's and school's curriculum rationale. They have also created a helpful, detailed curriculum and assessment framework. This outlines clearly what and how children will learn during their time at Letham Primary School and ECC. Staff have worked very well together to take on leadership roles to develop the school's curriculum. This is having a significant impact on the pace of change. Staff are now making better use of learning pathways for reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics. Teachers use these to plan progressive learning experiences which take good account of children's prior knowledge and skills. In a positive way, staff consult children more regularly about their learning which helps to inform what they will learn. Following the initial inspection, the acting headteacher and staff took prompt steps to improve play-based approaches to learning in P1. This has continued to be an area of focus and practice continues to improve.

Improve children's learning experiences at the early level to ensure a stronger focus on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills.

The ECC and school have made very good progress in addressing this area for improvement.

Senior leaders and staff have taken very positive steps to provide children with greater opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the early level. As a result, children now benefit from higher quality learning experiences which help them to make better progress in literacy and numeracy. For example, practitioners and teachers make effective use of digital technology to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. Children benefit from skilled interventions by practitioners and teachers which help to develop well their early language and communication skills. Senior leaders and practitioners have established successfully a well-resourced, rich learning environment, which promotes very well children's literacy and numeracy skills. Children in P1 experience a range of literacy and numeracy activities during each day with different adults, including child-led opportunities, which extend their learning and encourages purposeful, independent play.

What happens next?

The school has made very good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Perth and Kinross Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Jackie Maley
HM Inspector