

8 February 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education 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 Kingussie Primary School and Nursery Class, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Kingussie Primary School and Nursery Class. 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, young people and families through COVID-19

The new headteacher took up post in November 2020. A particular challenge for the headteacher was getting to know the community and children during the pandemic. COVID-19 has had, and is continuing to have, significant impact on the school and the community. Many children live in a rural community and experience connectivity problems which staff tried hard to address during periods of remote learning.

During periods of remote learning, staff took positive steps to provide children with materials and digital resources to support their learning. They provided recorded lessons and live check-ins for children. Staff made good efforts to maintain communication with parents. Effective use was made of the local hub to meet the needs of children and families. Staff identify gaps in learning within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing now children are back in school buildings. They have made a good start in addressing these gaps in learning. Staff should now build on this good start to ensure children make good progress and continue to improve attainment. The headteacher and staff have ensured an appropriate focus on identifying wellbeing needs and improving how they address these through developing nurturing classrooms.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The new headteacher provides strong leadership to the work of the school. She has quickly established positive relationships with staff, children and their families since her appointment last year. She has made good progress in improving the school despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic. In the last year, she has provided much needed structure and support for staff in their work. This is leading to improvements in learning and teaching, attainment and how the school meets children's needs.

Staff have engaged well with training provided to improve children's learning experiences. They now provide many opportunities for children to use digital technology to enhance their learning. Across the school children are now more involved in deciding what they want to

learn and now have more opportunities to lead their learning. As a result, they are now more active in their learning.

Staff identify appropriate supports needed for individuals and closely monitor these to ensure children are making progress in their learning. The teacher with responsibility for support for learning has improved the approaches to meeting children's needs across the school. She has developed and improved the record keeping and planning for children with additional support needs. There are now clearer records of children's targets to improve their learning. As a result, children with additional support needs are beginning to make better progress in their learning. Staff have worked well together to develop children's skills in self-regulating their own behaviour. Across the school children are now well-behaved and engaged in their learning.

The headteacher and staff have improved approaches to assessing children's progress. They now assess most aspects of literacy and numeracy and track children's progress throughout the year. A clearer approach to assessment is ensuring that staff have a better understanding of where children are in their learning. Staff should continue to create assessments linked to the National Benchmarks to support their decisions on whether children have achieved a level.

In the nursery, practitioners have improved how they track the progress children make in their learning. Children now have improved access to their learning profile. The profile is beginning to provide an accurate overview of the progress children are making in their learning at nursery. Practitioners have developed new ways to plan for children's learning. This is much more responsive to children's interests. As this develops further, care should be taken to ensure what children need to learn next is included in the planning consistently.

Practitioners have made considerable improvements to the environment to create a space for learning that supports children's learning. As a result, children are able to make increased choices, follow their interests and be more independent in their play. Children are now motivated and demonstrate a high level of engagement in their learning. They particularly enjoy challenging themselves in tasks such as jigsaws and retelling stories. Practitioners have sourced and purchased clothing for children to helpfully ensure everyone can benefit from outdoor learning in all weathers.

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 implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. The Highland Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector