

17 February 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**East End Primary School and Nursery Class
The Moray Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including developing opportunities for children to achieve beyond the classroom, pupil learning logs, approaches to teaching mathematics and tracking children's attainment. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

East End Primary School provides a caring environment, but standards of teaching and learning are in need of improvement. Children in the nursery learn effectively through play. Most cooperate well, share toys and take turns. They are developing independence as they dress for outdoor play and serve themselves drinks at snack time. Children are increasing the time they concentrate on activities and persevere to complete tasks. Too many activities are overly adult-directed. We have asked the school to do more to help children and their parents understand what progress children are making. Most children at the primary stages enjoy being at school where they feel safe and well cared for. The majority are attentive and respond well to instructions. In a few lessons, children are given opportunities to develop independence, make choices and to take responsibility for their own learning. When children are given challenging problems to solve, they are motivated and enthusiastic. In many lessons however, children are too passive in their learning. Often teachers spend too much time talking to the class. Staff do not always manage challenging behaviour well. Across the school, the pace of learning needs to be increased and the range of learning activities broadened. Almost all children are uncertain of the progress they have made or of the levels they have achieved.

In the nursery, children respond well to having their achievements rewarded with 'stars'. Working with parents, staff should try to plan experiences for children that take account of what they have learned at home. Nursery children are developing effective communication skills. They hold conversations with adults and peers and follow directions. Most understand the purpose of written language. They enjoyed mark-making when playing in the 'post office' and should be given more opportunities

like this to develop their writing skills. Most are developing an awareness of numbers and time, but would benefit from more opportunities to learn by investigating and solving problems. Across the primary stages, children have a few opportunities to take responsibility. Most have chosen books for the library. Those at P7 support new pupils in P1. After-school clubs help children build their skills in some team sports. There is considerable potential to extend learning within the local community and to develop children's skills in activities and committees beyond the classroom. Standards of attainment across the school are too low. Children's literacy and numeracy skills in particular are below the levels we would expect at each stage. Most children at the early stages are developing the skills to help them to read unfamiliar words. Children progress steadily through a scheme of reading books. Library improvements are underway which will broaden the range of literature available to children. Most children's writing is not of the standard we would expect. Their stories and reports are too short and do not demonstrate a well developed range of skills. Children do not demonstrate sufficient skills or experience in making oral presentations. There are significant gaps in children's mathematical skills, including mental calculation. Only children in P7 are making sufficient progress in applying their numeracy skills to real-life problems such as managing budgets. In health and wellbeing, children can talk about keeping themselves fit and healthy, and can explain how to keep safe on social media. In science, older children showed a good understanding of the solar system. Children's skills in thinking and working scientifically were less well developed.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff in the nursery and across the primary stages provide a good standard of pastoral care. Nursery staff work effectively with other agencies to support children. They set tasks at the correct level for the majority of children. We have asked them to use their observations of children during play sessions to plan next steps in learning for individual children. This will ensure children's needs are better met. Across the primary stages, activities in English language and mathematics are not always suitably challenging or well matched to individual needs. Teachers need to use assessment better to plan learning experiences which build on children's existing skills. Staff have started to gather information about children's learning needs and now need to provide more effective support. Learning plans are in place for a few children with specific learning needs, but not for all children who need them. Children with additional support needs are not making enough progress. Staff need better support for meeting the range of children's needs in their classes.

The curriculum in the nursery fits well with children's interests and includes daily outdoor learning. More collaboration is needed between staff at the early level to ensure children's existing skills are built upon at the primary stages. In the nursery and across the primary stages, the curriculum is based on Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Teachers at the primary stages have adopted planning formats which are beginning to ensure a more progressive experience for children over time. In mathematics and English language, programmes of work ensure progression in children's learning from stage to stage. Staff at the early primary stages offer some opportunities for children to learn through discovery and play. Overall, however, the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence is significantly behind national timescales. In several curriculum areas, there are no progressive programmes of study in place.

Staff have not yet planned how they will develop and assess children's skills in literacy and numeracy, and health and wellbeing across the curriculum. As a result, there are gaps in children's learning. The school has a well-planned transition programme in place to support children when moving on to Elgin Academy.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The Moray Council carried out a review of the school in January 2014, identifying seven key areas for improvement. Staff have begun to discuss and action some of the issues identified in that report. However, the school's improvement plans have not been effective in bringing about the required changes. The headteacher has recently taken up the post on a permanent basis. She has carried out informal evaluations and has a general understanding of how the school needs to improve. She now urgently needs to establish effective systems for evaluating and improving the work of the school. She needs to focus her leadership activity on driving improvement in learning and the curriculum. The headteacher and staff engaged fully with the inspection process. They sought and implemented our advice, making some immediate improvements. They are very keen to improve the school and would benefit from support from The Moray Council to develop their knowledge and skills.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The welcoming and caring staff and their strong ambition to improve the school.
- How well staff know children and the high quality of pastoral care they provide.
- Remodelling of areas of the school building, including the library, which have supported improvements in learning and the school's ethos.

We discussed with staff and The Moray Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school to better meet children's learning needs.
- Develop staff and parents' understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and draw up a clear plan for its implementation.
- Introduce rigorous systems for self-evaluation to ensure improvements in children's achievements.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings, we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with The Moray Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within a year of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Jacqueline Sinclair
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/EastEndPrimarySchoolMoray.asp>

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.

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