

7 March 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2020, HM Inspectors published a letter on Meethill School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in January 2022. 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.

Improve children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. Staff should establish a clear strategy to raise attainment and achievement for all children across the school and nursery class which increases expectations of standards and progression in learning.

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved across the school. The majority of children achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in June 2022. Senior leaders and all staff should continue to ensure that raising attainment further remains a key priority for the school.

Senior leaders now meet with staff in the school and the nursery three times per year to discuss children's attainment and review evidence of learning. This is helping staff to have a better understanding of children's progress and plan appropriate support. Moving forward, senior leaders should consider how they will track children's progress in other curricular areas beyond literacy and numeracy.

Teachers are developing consistent approaches to assessment and are beginning to develop a shared understanding of standards. They recognise the benefit of working together and are very keen for this to continue. Senior leaders must now ensure that teachers have sufficient time and support to take improvements forward at a quicker pace.

Staff display and celebrate children's work effectively. Children's writing is presented well. Teachers are using a new approach to teach and assess writing and spelling. There are early signs of this approach resulting in an improvement in children's writing.

Staff working across early level in the nursery and school have worked together successfully to provide rich opportunities for children to learn through play. By sharing assessment information, they have been able to provide smooth transitions for children and inform planning for learning in the nursery and school. Their practical and joined-up approach is supporting improvement in attainment and achievement at early level.

Senior leaders should consider how they can develop approaches to tracking children's wider achievements. The information gathered will help to identify gaps in participation and support children to recognise the skills they are developing through various activities. Children would

benefit from having increased opportunities to develop and extend their leadership and citizenship skills through participation in pupil groups and committees. This will, in turn, further support improved attainment and achievement.

Work as a team to ensure all children experience high quality learning and teaching.

The overall quality of learning and teaching has improved since the original inspection. Teachers and senior leaders have worked together to develop a learning and teaching policy. This has led to more consistent approaches and better outcomes for learners across the school. Senior leaders need to ensure that teachers now have regular and well-planned opportunities to give and receive feedback on their teaching. This will help to improve further the quality of children's learning experiences.

Teachers are planning appropriate activities for children in literacy and numeracy which include aspects of choice in learning. They are helping children to build on their knowledge and understanding within and across CfE levels. Senior leaders should now consider how to support teachers to plan effectively and share standards in all curricular areas.

Teachers are beginning to provide increased challenge for children to encourage them to think more deeply about their learning. Teachers share intended learning and help children to understand what they need to do to achieve success. As a next step, teachers should continue to develop and improve their approaches to involving children in identifying how they can be successful in their learning.

Teachers use digital technology regularly to motivate and engage children and help them to learn. At the early stages, the use of an online application to share learning is enabling parents to see the learning their children experience through play. Parents value this insight into their child's progress.

Staff should ensure all children have increased opportunities to lead their own learning and be more involved in evaluating their own progress.

Since the original inspection, staff in the school and the nursery have made positive progress in taking forward this area for improvement.

In the nursery, practitioners take steps to ensure that there is a balance of child led and planned learning. Children's views and thoughts about their future and previous learning are evident within the playroom and in their profiles. Children choose where they wish to play across the indoor and outdoor areas confidently.

Children at the early stages of primary have opportunities to express choice in both free play sessions and when selecting play activities linked to planned learning. Children are beginning to share and capture their thoughts on their own learning through recently introduced learning journals. Staff working at early level in the school should now help children to understand what they are learning and provide more challenge in play activities.

Across the school, children are benefitting from increased choice within their learning. There remains a need for senior leaders to ensure that all teachers are supported to provide choice in learning that is appropriate and at the right level of difficulty for all children.

Children in the nursery have specific targets linked to observations made by key workers. In the school, teachers provide written feedback on children's writing, which is supporting children to have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve. Children would now benefit greatly from receiving more feedback on their progress. This includes the opportunity to engage in conversations about learning with their teacher.

Teachers summarise key teaching points at the end of lessons and help children to assess their own learning. Teachers now need to provide more support for children in this process and guide them to evaluate their progress against the agreed criteria.

Teachers are making a positive start to leading development work on aspects of school improvement, including a focus on children having increased ownership of their own learning. Senior leaders should ensure that there are clear aims and an appropriate allocation of time for this work. This should help ensure that it begins to have a positive impact as quickly as possible. There is significant potential to involve more children and parents in leading improvements.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within 12 months of this 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 Aberdeenshire Council, that we intend to take.

M. A. Speirs
HM Inspector