

17 September 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In May 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Kinlochbervie Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The Highland 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.

Improve the strategic leadership of continuous improvement and ensure staff, parents, children and partners are fully involved in the work of Kinlochbervie Primary School.

The senior leadership team (SLT) revised remits has strengthened their effectiveness and improved outcomes for children. Together, with all staff, the SLT worked well to address the areas for improvement identified within the original inspection report. Of note is their ability to make a positive difference across the school during a period of staff absence. Staff have increased opportunities to work together and take part in professional learning and school improvement activities. Staff visit other schools to see good practice and more effective working with staff across the North West Sutherland Associated School's Group (ASG) has improved relationships. In addition, senior leaders utilise the individual skills of staff to benefit children across the school.

The school has improved approaches to involve children and parents in the life and work of the school. Parental views inform changes and members of the Parent Council feel consulted and involved in school improvement. Of note, is the significant increase in the number of children who feel that the school seeks and listens to their views. As a result, children are now proud of their school and feel that they make a difference.

Approaches to self-evaluation have been strengthened. The development of an electronic tracking system, the introduction of regular tracking meetings, and an enhanced quality assurance programme, are beginning to provide senior leaders with a clearer understanding of the quality of learning and teaching and children's progress across the school. To support new teachers in both classes next session, we have asked senior leaders to continue to ensure rigour in their approach to self-evaluation and quality assurance. The pace of change should be maintained and levels of attainment increased.

Improve planning, assessment, tracking and monitoring to ensure there are clear processes in place which are used effectively by all staff.

Staff have refreshed the curriculum rationale and their approach to planning learning and teaching, supported by local authority guidance. Working together as a school and across the ASG, teachers take greater account of children's prior learning. Staff have improved approaches to developing children's skills in reading, including the creation of a new reading area within the school building. Analysis of assessment information indicates that the majority

of children now make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. A few are making good progress. We asked staff to ensure that this progress is maintained and enhanced.

Staff are more familiar with assessing children's progress in relation to Curriculum for Excellence levels. We agree with senior leaders that more work needs to be done to ensure that professional judgements are robust and reliable.

With support from the local authority, senior leaders have developed a bespoke monitoring and tracking system that, while at the early stages of development, is allowing senior leaders to monitor progress of children in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. It also allows staff to monitor children's participation in wider achievements and the progress of identified individuals and groups. Staff now involve children in reflecting on their own progress and setting of personal learning targets. Termly learning conversations have been introduced, with conversations recorded by staff in children's learning profiles. We have asked the school to increase children's responsibility for their own learning profiles.

Develop high quality learning and teaching across the school to support improved progress and attainment for all children.

The majority of children experience good quality learning and teaching. Staff have taken steps to develop a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching. Children are responding well to improvements in the quality of written feedback about their learning. They have opportunities to contribute to planning and make decisions about how they want to undertake tasks. They appreciate the opportunities provided to lead learning. Strategies used to increase children's resilience are successfully helping the majority of children to persevere more in their learning. Moving forward, we asked senior leaders to ensure that more children experience consistently high quality learning and teaching more regularly.

Staff know children well and use their understanding of individual needs when planning learning. Approaches to planning learning have improved and meets the needs of the majority of children. We agree with the school that further work needs to be done to ensure that all children experience appropriate pace and challenge in their learning. This will help address the need to increase levels of attainment across the school.

Work with all stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the school's approach to promoting positive behaviour.

The school refreshed its approach to promoting positive behaviour in a variety of ways. In consultation with staff, children and parents, a draft policy has been developed. This reflects the schools commitment to children's rights. Having recently been awarded a Rights Respecting School bronze level award, plans are in place to develop this further. Professional learning has been undertaken by staff in respect of the more restorative approaches now being taken. Anti-bullying workshops have also been provided for parents and children. Children have been actively involved in the development of 'S.A.F.E' posters, which promote positive behaviour and a consistency of expectation around the school. We have asked the school to continue to involve all stakeholders in the further development of its policy and approaches, taking fuller account of national guidance.

The use of the 'Reach for the Stars' display is supporting staff and children to recognise positive behaviour and achievements. Children are responding positively to the reward systems introduced by class teachers this session. School assemblies are supporting children to reflect on aspects of wellbeing. Children are beginning to develop their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. We have asked the school to develop this further.

Children speak very positively about the introduction of playground buddies and a friendship bench. They feel these have contributed to improved behaviour across the school. Most parents who met with inspectors also felt that the standard of behaviour in school had improved, particularly recently. Steps need to be taken to address the concerns raised by a few parents in relation to behaviour. We have asked senior leaders to continue to work in partnership with parents to ensure a shared understanding of approaches and the resolution of concerns.

What happens next?

The school has made progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on further progress within 12 months 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 Highland Council that we intend to take.

Pamela Adamson
HM Inspector