

18 June 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Hawthornden Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Midlothian 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 quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school to ensure all children are making the best possible progress in their learning.

Since the initial inspection there has been an unsettled period of staff changes. However, the school is now in a much better place with the recent appointment of a new permanent headteacher and senior management team. All teaching and support staff were eager to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school and the Enhanced Nurture Base (ENB). Senior leaders recognised this and took prompt action to make improvements. There has been a necessary focus on improving literacy and numeracy. As a result of the steps put in place, the quality of learning and teaching is improving across the school. Children are responding well to better organised learning opportunities and are more enthused and involved in deciding what they need to learn next.

Teachers have regular meetings with senior staff to discuss children's progress and address any barriers to successful learning. Consistency in planning and assessment through more effective monitoring of practice by the senior management team is leading towards children making better progress in their learning. Significant changes have been made to how children learn in primary one. Imaginative use of the environment for learning is resulting in a more exciting and purposeful place for children to learn. Staff across the two classes work very well as a team. Staff are highly organised, resources are well-prepared and different techniques are in place to keep children eager to learn. There are plans in place to extend more active learning across the other classes in the school. Despite this progress, we have advised that there still a few inconsistencies in learning and teaching across the school which still need to be addressed. Additionally, we noticed on a few occasions that a few lessons were not meeting the learning need of all children. We have advised senior staff of ways to address this to ensure all children have their learning needs well met to make consistent progress.

To raise attainment in literacy and numeracy staff need to improve the use of assessment information during the course of their teaching to meet the individual needs of children.

It is clear that the school now has a shared understanding and commitment to raising attainment for all learners. Since the previous inspection, more children are now making better progress in literacy and numeracy. Most children are expected to make appropriate progress in numeracy at early and first levels with a majority making appropriate progress at

second level. Significantly, all children who attend the Enhanced Nurture Base (ENB) have made progress in learning from the time they have attended the school.

The senior leadership team has developed a three year plan to improve the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy. The introduction of the Midlothian Understanding Maths Program and a maths recovery programme is supporting staff to identify, and address gaps in children's learning. New approaches to teaching reading have been put in place. There are early indications that these are having a positive impact on children's progress in reading. Positive feedback from children's literacy focus groups is telling us that children now enjoy reading more. Staff in the school are working together to improve children's skills in writing. The school recognises that writing is an area for continued development.

Senior staff are introducing and refining approaches to assessment and the tracking of children's progress. Staff use in-house assessments and standardised assessments including Scottish National Standardised Assessments are supporting teacher professional judgements. They are now well-placed to develop further these assessment approaches to support planning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners. To improve further, staff should continue to build their skills in the use of assessment procedures. This should include interrogating attainment data in order to address any differences which may affect children's ongoing progress.

Develop flexible curricular pathways, to ensure that there are shared standards and expectations across the school so that children make the best possible progress in their learning.

The staff team have worked well together to create progression pathways across literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and social studies. These are now ensuring a more consistent approach in delivery of these areas of the curriculum in all classes. Children's work on "Equalities and Planet Earth " drew on children's literacy and technology skills by making a short video, writing an article for a newspaper, researching information on planet earth and the effect of natural events on the environment. The inspection team noted that the school could make more use of the school's outdoor environment to widen children's experiences further. We have asked the senior leadership team to keep under review the development of the outstanding curricular pathways to ensure maximum impact and consistency.

Ensure that the specialist provision is better integrated within the school so that children, particularly on part-time placements achieve their full entitlement to a broad general education.

Following a local authority review of its provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs, the school has taken significant steps to improve the integration of children who attend the specialist provision within their mainstream schools. An important aspect of the local authority and school review of provision is social inclusion. Staff now ensure that children have opportunities to socialise with their peers in the playground, in mainstream classes and school events as far as possible. Children who attend the ENB have access to a full curriculum including a base class within their mainstream primary school. Children in the ENB access visiting specialist teachers including physical education and art to ensure their curriculum entitlement. All children who attend ENB now have regular

multi-agency reviews of their progress which are meeting their needs in a more co-ordinated way. Planning to reduce barriers to learning and support children's inclusion in their mainstream school has improved. The school recognises that it would be helpful to provide an overview of each child's progress in achieving experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CFE). This will help to clarify children's progress and identify gaps in learning skills, particularly in writing and number bonds. Teachers should continue to ensure that they are confident about standards for achievement of CFE levels through moderation activities with mainstream colleagues.

What happens next?

The school has made 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. Midlothian Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Elizabeth Paterson
HM Inspector