

17 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In August 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Fenwick Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement, which we agreed with the school and East Ayrshire Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in August 2018. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership in the school. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the new headteacher and staff. We heard from the new 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.

In order to raise attainment and achievement for all, the school should use its three-year strategic plan to improve all areas of the curriculum.

Senior leaders, working with staff, have raised attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school. They have made increasingly effective use of strategic planning to continue to improve all areas of the curriculum. Overall, this has resulted in positive progress in this area for improvement.

The new headteacher has established a range of positive relationships and practices to foster better self-evaluation at every level in the school. She is focused appropriately upon raising attainment and achievement for all children, and is receptive to the advice and suggestions of others. The principal teacher has played a key role in sustaining momentum over the period of changes in the school, providing staff with much appreciated support.

Senior leaders and staff have worked well together to continue to improve and develop the curriculum. They have introduced successfully, suitable programmes across all areas of the curriculum. Children told us about the improvements to their learning. As a result, they are experiencing a broader range of subjects and topics. They now make better progress in their learning.

Senior leaders and staff use collegiate meetings and working parties well to continue to develop the curriculum, in order to improve outcomes for children. Staff should now ensure there is a clear overview of the curriculum so there is no unnecessary repetition or gaps in children's learning.

As a next step, the senior leadership team, together with staff, should evaluate and monitor the impact of the curriculum pathways to ensure these support children effectively to develop their skills and knowledge across the curriculum. They should improve assessment approaches, in order to raise further children's attainment and achievement across all stages and curricular areas.

Develop staff's skills in tracking and monitoring of children's progress, making effective use of all relevant data.

Senior leaders have worked well with staff to ensure that there are more robust systems in place for tracking and monitoring children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders now use data from a range of sources to ensure children's learning needs in literacy and numeracy are being met better by class teachers. The senior leadership team and education authority provide improved support for class teachers to develop their skills in analysing performance data.

Teaching staff are implementing target setting more consistently across the school, which is helping to engage children more in providing robust evidence of their learning. As a result, children now have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve, and are beginning to evaluate their own progress. Across the school, most children are on track to achieve in line with national expectations in literacy and numeracy.

Teachers are beginning to make more effective use of assessment information to plan learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy. They are starting to use tracking systems well to track and monitor individual children's progress to inform their next steps in learning. Staff are providing more helpful, accurate and meaningful feedback to children about their progress, for example in jotters and through learning conversations.

Senior leaders and teachers need to develop a robust framework for assessing children's work and use this to inform the planning of learning and teaching. Whilst teachers gather assessment information in literacy and numeracy, they are aware of the need to develop and gather clear information on children's progress and attainment across all curricular areas.

Improve learning, teaching and assessment as a priority, ensuring an appropriate level of pace and challenge for all.

Senior leaders and staff have continued to seek improvements in learning, teaching and assessment. Overall, these approaches have had a positive influence on the quality of children's learning.

With the local authority's support, senior leaders have invested significantly in professional learning for staff. This has had a positive influence on the quality of teaching and children's learning, at a time when there have been large scale changes in staffing.

Almost all children are interested in, and motivated by, the tasks they are given. Almost all respond well to the learning approaches which teachers promote, involving a balance of individual, group and whole class work.

Senior leaders' and teachers' approaches to observing colleagues' lessons have resulted in improved quality assurance, and stronger sharing of effective practice in learning and teaching. Staff continue to improve their skills and confidence in assessing children's progress, for example to confirm when children have achieved in line with national expectations.

The ongoing work of senior leaders and teachers to improve learning, teaching and assessment provides a sound basis for further, necessary improvements. Teachers' approaches to planning and teaching should be developed further to ensure all learning is appropriately challenging and meets the needs of all children. In addition, senior leaders and teachers should maintain their focus on improving their understanding of standards in children's achievements, and how they assess and track children's progress. This will ensure teachers' assessments of children's progress are increasingly more reliable and robust.

Senior leaders, with staff, need to continue to address areas for improvement and share good practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

Develop leadership across the school, particularly through the roles of class teachers and the contribution of children.

The new headteacher recognises the importance of using every resource available to the school. This includes engaging with all stakeholders to lead improvements in children's experiences and achievements. The new headteacher has shown good judgement in evaluating the school's strengths and development needs, and in giving clear priority to improving outcomes for children.

The principal teacher contributes to the leadership of the school, and develops key aspects of the school's work. Staff all contribute, through a range of important coordinator and leadership roles, to aspects of the curriculum and wider life of the school. As a next step, senior leaders, working with staff, should ensure that these remits focus clearly on and lead to required improvements in raising attainment and improving the quality of learning and teaching.

Children continue to have a variety of valuable opportunities to take on duties and responsibilities across the school, developing their skills as effective contributors and active citizens. All children take part in one or more of the school's committees. Through these experiences, children enhance their capacity to make worthwhile contributions and take leadership roles. These skills equip children well to lead appropriate aspects of learning in all areas of the curriculum. Senior leaders, with staff, should now develop more opportunities for all children to develop their skills for learning, life and work.

What happens next?

The school has taken positive steps to continue to address the areas for improvement identified during the initial inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve. We will join East Ayrshire Council officers in a review of the school's progress within 12 months of the publication of this report. East Ayrshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Dennise Sommerville
HM Inspector