

1 March 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of East End Primary School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a virtual meeting to East End Primary School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Throughout the first lockdown, staff responded purposefully by offering online learning to all children. They quickly recognised that a number of children and families had connectivity issues. Staff reacted well by delivering paper-based resource packs to those families unable to access digital platforms. Teachers developed a wide range of interesting activities for learning outdoors. Most children and families participated enthusiastically in these new activities making good use of local outdoor spaces. Children developed well their knowledge of nature and improved their fitness.

During the second lockdown, East End Primary School became a hub for identified children. Most children participated well at the hub, engaging in a lively manner with the learning activities on offer. Teachers undertook valuable professional learning to develop their skills in digital learning. As a result, they were able to offer a greater variety of digital-based lessons. Children enjoyed taking part in a wider range of online learning activities. They improved their levels of participation significantly compared to the first lockdown.

Staff understood the importance of supporting children's and families' wellbeing during lockdown. They regularly checked in with families via virtual meetings and telephone calls. Senior leaders also established a dedicated team to support families' needs in a variety of ways, including regular wellbeing walks to combat social isolation. Upon the school's full reopening in August 2021, staff carefully assessed and monitored the wellbeing of all children. They provided extra support and nurture well for identified children.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Senior leaders have installed a greater sense of direction for school improvement. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, new approaches to evaluate children's progress and achievements have been adopted well by staff and the curriculum is developing effectively. Senior leaders have taken positive initial steps to improve approaches to self-evaluation. Staff are gathering valuable data and information to begin to identify successfully what is

working well in the school and where progress is limited. Views of staff and parents are being increasingly sought and are starting to influence future improvement priorities. Senior leaders now need to ensure that continuous improvement is embedded further across the school and nursery. In doing so, they need to identify creative opportunities for learners to develop leadership skills. Children's views should contribute more towards positive changes at the school.

Teachers have participated in an extensive range of professional learning to improve their practice. They meet regularly to share initiatives and are developing a collective understanding of what constitutes a good lesson. In most classes, learning and teaching approaches have improved. There are strong, respectful relationships between children and staff. Most children are engaging meaningfully in learning activities which are matched well to their needs and interests. However, this is not yet consistent across all classes. Senior leaders need to continue to monitor the quality of learning and teaching across the school, providing support and challenge to teachers when necessary. This will help ensure that all children receive high quality learning experiences.

Teachers are using a wider range of assessment approaches to influence future planning. They are more confident in using a variety of techniques to ascertain children's progress. Most teachers are using questioning skills effectively to measure children's level of understanding. Senior leaders have introduced planned collegiate sessions to support staff to develop a shared understanding of standards. Due to the challenges of COVID-19, teachers have not yet been able to meet on a regular basis to discuss children's learning. They now need to prioritise this collaborative work. Teachers would also benefit from stronger partnership working with neighbouring schools to liaise with colleagues and share practice. This would help to build their confidence in making more accurate professional judgements about children's progress across the curriculum.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the school's aspirations to raise children's attainment and achievement. However, overall, most children are achieving better in literacy and numeracy. Staff are working well to identify any gaps in children's learning. They are providing targeted support purposefully to help children achieve. As planned, senior leaders and staff should continue to focus on raising children's attainment and achievement across the school. Building on work already underway, further improvement in children's writing skills is a necessary next step.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Moray Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector