

17 December 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In November 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Wallyford Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and East Lothian 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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.

Teachers should continue to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Teachers have made a positive start in raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. The overall quality of attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved since the original inspection in November 2023. The headteacher is supporting teachers well to improve how they gather and use data to understand better children's attainment. Teachers' professional judgements of children's achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level are now more accurate. This is as a result of the professional learning provided by the headteacher and local authority. Children at all stages across the school are making better progress in their learning.

Whilst attainment is improving, there remains scope to raise further the attainment of all children. The headteacher and teachers need to continue to focus on improving the quality of learning, teaching and assessment to improve attainment more quickly. This should help to ensure that all children are achieving their potential and making the best possible progress.

Teachers and practitioners should continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the nursery and school. This will support children to make the progress they are capable of.

Overall, staff have made strong progress in improving the quality of learning and teaching. Practitioners in the nursery now make better use of the extensive indoor areas to offer a broad range of learning experiences. Children now experience more open-ended learning which better meets their interests and needs in both playrooms. Children now have access to better quality materials that encourage them to mark make. Practitioners have increased the quality of mathematics resources across the nursery. These improvements are now supporting children to make better progress in their learning.

Most practitioners have improved the quality of their interactions with children. They now ask children more open-ended questions and encourage children to talk about their learning which extends their thinking.

Across the school, staff know children very well and there are caring and respectful relationships between adults and children. This is supporting most children to engage well in learning.

Senior leaders provide stable, effective leadership and support that has enabled teachers to make significant positive changes in their approaches to learning and teaching. As teachers develop and embed these approaches, children are beginning to make better progress in learning, particularly in reading and writing.

Senior leaders and staff reviewed and adapted the environments for learning to better meet the needs of children. This includes, for example, the newly developed P1 classroom, the school library, play spaces and calm zones throughout the school. Children access these spaces to play, regulate their emotions or work independently or in small groups. This is supporting children's engagement well and they are now more independent in learning.

Teachers have engaged in a range of meaningful professional learning to improve their approaches to learning and teaching. For example, they have learned new skills to improve their approaches to learning and teaching through play, writing and numeracy. As a result, teachers are more confident in planning and teaching in these areas. Most children now experience high-quality play environments across the early level which support them to be curious and engage in their learning. Children are also more motivated to write and have a clearer understanding of how to improve their learning. These improvements to learning and teaching are impacting positively on children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Most children now engage well in their learning. At times, a few children continue to become distressed or overwhelmed in class. Staff are skilled in supporting these children to manage their emotions. Senior leaders now need to improve further the planning for children who require additional support with their learning to ensure their needs are better met.

As planned, staff should continue to develop high-quality learning and teaching approaches and embed these consistently across the school and nursery. This will support all children to make the best possible progress in learning.

Teachers and practitioners should use information gathered through assessment opportunities to match better the tasks and activities to children's needs and abilities.

Overall, practitioners and teachers have made positive progress in using information gathered through assessment opportunities to better match the tasks and activities to children's needs and abilities.

The nursery leadership team have worked well with practitioners to improve approaches to planning and assessment. They now make better use of quality observations to inform their planning of learning. Practitioners use their weekly huddles to share information about children's learning with each other more effectively. This is helping to ensure that all staff are more aware of children's needs and can address these better during free flow play.

Senior leaders, supported by local authority officers, provided teachers with professional learning on effective assessment approaches. As a result, teachers have a deeper

understanding of how to use assessment to plan learning. Teachers now use information gained from assessments more effectively to plan and provide tasks set at the right level of difficulty for most children. As a next step, senior leaders should continue to work with all teachers to improve the consistency of planning across the school.

Teachers have engaged in regular planned activities to agree the standard of children's work, both as a staff team and with staff in other local schools. This is leading to staff having greater confidence in their professional judgements about children's achievement of national standards.

Senior leaders now need to develop and use more effective tracking and monitoring approaches. This should help them to measure the progress children make over time and the impact interventions have in closing attainment gaps.

There has been strong progress in the development and use of effective tracking and monitoring approaches.

The headteacher has improved the effectiveness of the school's approaches to tracking and monitoring children's learning in literacy, numeracy, and wellbeing. She has worked very well with teachers to develop their ability to use assessment information confidently to inform their teaching. Most teachers now have a clear understanding of children who are on track, those who need further support and those who are exceeding expectations in learning. They are now beginning to plan better learning that meets the needs of children as a result.

Teachers use the tracking system effectively to record levels of attainment and to predict how well children will progress. This is supporting them well to ensure that the majority of children attain and achieve as well as possible. The headteacher meets with teachers termly to discuss the planning of learning and to review the progress and attainment of all children. Children with additional needs are identified and interventions are put in place to support learning. Senior leaders and teachers need to continue to review the effectiveness of interventions through careful monitoring of children's progress. This should ensure that outcomes for learners are improved.

The headteacher is at the early stages of measuring the progress children make over time and the impact interventions have in closing attainment gaps. As more accurate information about children's attainment is gathered, she should be well placed to evidence better the progress of particular groups. She should also be able to demonstrate better how the pace of closing attainment gaps is increasing.

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. East Lothian Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Denise Penman
HM Inspector