

21 December 2021

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 Fraserburgh North Primary School, we said that we would engage with the school and its nursery to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit. 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 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

The school and its nursery are at the heart of the Fraserburgh community and place high importance on the wellbeing of children and families. The pandemic has heightened staff awareness to the needs of the wider community and the impact on children and families. The headteacher and staff work tirelessly to ensure the wellbeing of all children. Parents we spoke to, are highly appreciative of the efforts made by teachers in providing them with ongoing support and particularly during the period of remote learning. The support staff team developed the trust of parents and gained their respect and appreciation for the varied supports they provide. Pupil support workers are effective in their roles. They know families very well and know how to seek support or signpost them to other services for help. A programme for family learning continues to evolve, with parents currently involved in children's learning in a variety of ways. Children are developing their resilience and feel well supported by the school. They know how to get help when they need it and are developing confidence in recognising and talking about their emotions with one another. The headteacher and staff monitor children's progress effectively and are committed to ensuring all children continue to make appropriate progress in their learning. The school should implement its long term aims to raise attainment and continue to celebrate children's achievements.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Since the original inspection, Aberdeenshire Council appointed a new headteacher who has been in post since September 2018. Leadership of the school is strong and the headteacher is well established in her role. Her commitment to the school and its improvements is evidenced through the strong progress made since the original inspection.

The headteacher is highly respected and held in high esteem by the staff, parents and the wider community. They speak of her passion for the school and strong focus on improving outcomes for children and families. She has led the school effectively during the challenging period of a pandemic. Commendably, the headteacher has led the staff team successfully in developing a nurturing environment across the nursery and school. The school is inclusive

and everyone we spoke to said they feel welcomed and valued. Strategic leadership is a strength. The headteacher and staff have a clear improvement plan for the school and are ambitious for children. Teamwork across the staff is effective and a clear indication that staff morale is high. Communication between staff with varying roles is also a strength. This ensures everyone is focused on learning and how well children are making progress. All staff play an important role in ensuring children are ready to learn. Teaching staff liaise well with those in supporting roles and ensure their time is used purposefully with groups and individual children. The support team are an integral part of the school's work in improving how well children learn.

The school, including the nursery has made very good progress in monitoring improvements to children's achievements and the quality of the learning environment. These features are developing well and help school staff and nursery practitioners to improve approaches together. The headteacher and key staff monitor closely the assessment and identification of children's needs. Teachers provide interesting lessons that are matched well to meet the learning needs of individuals and groups. They make clear what children are to learn and how they will know they are successful. The learning environment is calm and inviting and children settle quickly to their learning. Teachers are developing consistent approaches to help children build on what they have already learned.

Overall, teachers, nursery practitioners and support staff are providing well-planned learning experiences. The indoor space of the nursery has been developed creatively, offering children the opportunity to explore and learn in a warm and nurturing environment. Children enjoy free-flow access to an attractive outdoor space, which offers a range of play experiences. P1 children are learning effectively through play. They demonstrate a high level of interest in their tasks and enjoy talking about their learning. Overall, attainment and achievement across the school is not yet improving at an expected rate due to the impact of the pandemic. Attainment across the primary stages shows signs of having slowed. However, by P7 a significant majority of children are making good progress in writing. The school is well-focused on children's attainment levels and is addressing gaps in children's learning through well-planned support. Children with English as an additional language are making good progress and those with additional support needs are making appropriate progress through targeted support. The headteacher and staff should continue to share children's achievements and further develop their approaches to assessing children's progress.

The school has made very good progress in improving approaches to equality and valuing diversity. Children are proud of their school and are developing skills as caring citizens. They are taking increasing responsibility for the school environment and its recently designed garden area. They support one another well in class and apply these skills effectively when playing outdoors. Children are rewarded for their positive behaviours. Emotional thermometers are displayed in all classes and regular check-ins on feelings and emotions are taken regularly throughout the day. In the nursery, children engage daily in an emotional check in, which supports practitioners to understand fully how children are feeling. Children feel listened to and settle well to their learning. Everyone is proud to be associated with the school and its identity in the community as 'Team North'. The headteacher and staff strive to involve parents in the life and work of the school. The Parent Council has helped engage all parents in its work. This is a strength to be proud of and that all should continue to build upon to support positive outcomes for all children.

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. Aberdeenshire 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.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector