

5 November 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In January 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Glass Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire 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 children's attainment and achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Across the nursery class and primary classes, the quality of children's attainment and achievement in literacy and numeracy has continued to improve. In the nursery, local authority progression frameworks help practitioners to identify key skills and next steps in children's learning. Practitioners now record information from observations of children's achievements more effectively. The improved focus on numeracy and literacy means children now make satisfactory progress in these areas. Practitioners need to continue to embed this process into their practice and ensure that they can identify the progress children have made since starting nursery.

Across the primary classes, children now develop appropriate literacy and numeracy skills through more meaningful experiences. As a result, they are more motivated to learn and make better progress. For example, in literacy, they use humour very well to engage readers when writing poems in Doric. The very attractive posters on wall displays show children's knowledge about insects in the ecosystem and their skills in art, science and literacy. In numeracy, they very effectively create informative graphs and charts. Overall, the school's assessment data is more accurate and children's attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved. Children read and write more often, and they are more skilled in mental calculations. They are beginning to apply their literacy and numeracy skills well in other areas of their learning. We asked the school to continue to raise children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. In doing so, children need to continue to experience a broad literacy and numeracy curriculum across all their learning.

Improve leadership across the nursery class and school with a greater focus on high expectations and developing a clearer understanding of standards of attainment across the curriculum.

Within the nursery, as a relatively new team, practitioners are taking positive steps to improve the quality of the service for children and families. They have worked well together to implement a number of changes to improve children's experiences. As a result, children benefit from a wider range of resources and more opportunities to learn both indoors and outdoors. The lead practitioner's clear leadership and direction to practitioners is ensuring positive changes to the nursery. Staff are beginning to build their knowledge more

effectively of children as learners. The recently formed team meet together regularly, and together with the visiting principal teacher, reflect appropriately on what is working well and areas for improvement. Due to challenges with staffing in the school, no formal self-evaluation and monitoring of the nursery has taken place. We asked the school to ensure that the nursery becomes embedded fully in the whole school quality assurance processes. There is a need to support practitioners to undertake self-evaluation at a deeper and more focused level in order to ensure further improvement.

Across the primary classes, improvements in the school's leadership have had a positive impact on raising children's attainment and achievement. There is clear evidence of progress towards in the areas of improvement identified in the last inspection. Across the school, we observed higher expectations of children's progress and staff have a clearer understanding of standards required. Teachers now work more often with staff from other schools to ensure that children's learning is of a high enough standard. Due to the size of the school, approaches to quality assurance are often less formal. With the instability in staffing, we asked the school to ensure processes for reviewing quality improvement are in place. In addition, further raise children's attainment and achievement ensuring that staff build on what children already know across the curriculum.

Develop children's roles and voice to influence the work and the life of the school.

In the primary classes, children contribute enthusiastically to the life and work of the school. They are members of committees, participate in fund-raising events and choose resources to help them learn. The school has revisited and refreshed the vision, values and aims statement, involving school staff, pupils and parents. However, nursery practitioners, children and parents were not involved. This is a missed opportunity for practitioners and stakeholders to shape the vision for the nursery class as part of the school community. There is considerable scope to deepen practitioners', parents' and children's level of engagement in the work and life of the school community. For example, involvement in improvement planning and involving nursery children in the current school groups such as the Eco and 'weed and seed' group. In primary classes, children are beginning to know themselves as learners and talk about their learning. They now discuss their progress in relation to the health and wellbeing indicators. The indicators are understood by children with whom we spoke to during the inspection. Evidence recorded about children's views shows that there are a number of strengths in the way that children feel. However, there is a need to review the data collected and ensure that all children feel respected and included. In doing so, there is a need to continue to explore children's and parents' perceptions about wellbeing.

Develop approaches to monitoring and tracking children's progress leading to greater progress being made from their prior learning.

Within the nursery, practitioners' approaches to planning continue to develop with a clearer focus on learning rather than activities and resources. Recently, practitioners introduced individual overviews recording children's achievement of a skill. Currently, these do not demonstrate children's progress overtime. It will be important for practitioners to continue to build on children's prior learning and experiences. Practitioners would benefit from regular professional dialogue with the headteacher to discuss children's progress. These discussions should identify where individual children may require additional support or challenge in their learning. Practitioners also need to engage in moderation activities both within and beyond

the nursery to help develop robust professional judgements of children's progress and achievements.

The school has improved its approaches to monitoring and tracking children's curricular experiences. As a result, children now have a broader curriculum that takes more account of Curriculum for Excellence national guidance. Children's planned learning continues to be well organised. There are examples of lessons that meet the learning needs of children in the multi-stage composite classes very well. Children enthusiastically share their knowledge before starting new topics or themes. Questioning techniques of staff also help children make better progress in their learning. Children have greater ownership of learning journals with more meaningful personal targets. Children would benefit from developing further their use of digital technologies.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within eighteen months of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Aberdeenshire Council that we intend to take.

Elizabeth C Montgomery
HM Inspector