

10 September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Portgordon Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Moray 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.

Staff should raise attainment in literacy and numeracy for all children, ensuring children are supported and challenged to make the best possible progress.

Staff have made a positive start to addressing this area for improvement. Children are making better progress in literacy and numeracy. However, the rate of improvement should increase. Most children at early and senior stages are on track to achieve national expectations in literacy and numeracy. A minority are on track in the middle stages. Staff should build on the work undertaken to date to raise attainment further.

Senior leaders have created a calendar to identify when planned assessment activity should take place. This is providing greater consistency in gathering evidence of children's progress in literacy. Teachers are beginning to use this information more effectively to make increasingly reliable judgements on children's attainment. Staff should now ensure that they use similar approaches to assess and evaluate children's progress in numeracy. All assessments should be clearly linked to national standards. Staff now need to establish procedures and systems that will allow them to carefully record all the assessment information they gather from planned assessments. This will allow them to demonstrate more effectively the progress children make over time.

Teachers meet as a whole staff team at a few points in the year to review the attainment of all children. They should now be given opportunities regularly to meet with the headteacher to discuss the progress of each child in their class. This includes children who require additional support in their learning.

Staff should continue to work with other schools to develop a shared understanding of national standards.

Staff have made some progress in addressing this area for improvement.

Teachers have increased their awareness of national standards which outline expectations of attainment in literacy and numeracy. As a result, their judgements of children's progress based on national standards are becoming increasingly reliable.

Teachers have benefitted from discussing expectations and standards in children's writing over the course of the year with colleagues in local schools. As a result, they have a better

understanding of standards and are making more reliable judgements of children's progress in writing. Senior leaders should now provide opportunities for staff to undertake similar activities in other areas of the curriculum. This should result in teachers planning more effectively to support and challenge all children and raise attainment further in all areas of the curriculum.

Senior leaders should increase opportunities for teachers to engage in discussions with colleagues from other schools. This should help to develop further a shared understanding of how to plan for and evaluate children's progress effectively.

Senior leaders and staff should improve approaches to learning and teaching across the school. In doing so, they should ensure the pace of learning is brisker.

Staff have made some progress in improving approaches to learning and teaching however the pace still requires to be brisker.

Teachers have worked well to establish a consistent approach to sharing the purpose and relevance of learning with children. Teachers make clear reference to other learning undertaken which helps children to make clear links across different learning episodes. Teachers should now review their approaches to supporting children's understanding of how they can be successful in their learning. This will help children to reflect more accurately on mistakes they have made and what they need to improve.

Teachers have engaged well with research and local authority guidance on effective learning and teaching. Children are benefitting from a recent focus by staff on using questioning effectively to develop children's thinking skills. As a result, children are becoming more curious and creative during lessons.

Senior leaders have created a calendar which shares some of the activity they have planned to evaluate the quality and consistency of approaches to learning and teaching. These include observations of learning and discussions around planning and attainment. This is at the very early stages of implementation with little activity being completed at the time of the further inspection. Senior leaders must now evaluate the work of the school on a more rigorous and regular basis. This will help to inform their approaches to supporting teachers to improve the quality of learning and teaching. This should include feedback to support staff to develop their practice further.

Teachers plan well to meet the needs of most children. Teachers review and update their plans to record how well children have achieved the intended learning. Staff should now work together to improve further their approaches to planning. This should include reviewing all approaches to meeting the needs of all learners to provide greater support and challenge. In addition, senior leaders and the local authority must take swift action to improve approaches to identified aspects of safeguarding. In particular, they must prioritise effective improvements to planning, recording and support for children with additional support needs. Senior leaders must ensure that the safety, wellbeing and learning needs of all children are fully met.

What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Moray Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will liaise with representatives from Moray Council within three months of the publication of this letter to ensure our recommendations to improve safeguarding are addressed quickly. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within a year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Moray Council the details of this inspection and how the local authority is supporting improvement. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Judith Reid
HM Inspector