

13 December 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Newburgh Mathers School and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council**

In March 2014, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in May 2015. 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/young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Continue to raise standards of learning and teaching across the school and nursery in order to raise attainment.

Across the nursery and primary classes, children experience learning that is of good quality. They are now more engaged with and motivated towards their learning. Children are well mannered and well behaved throughout the school. They are very welcoming to visitors and express pride in their school. Nursery and primary children are now consistently involved in planning their learning across all curricular areas. They are comfortable working together in pairs and groups to complete tasks. Across the school, children are confident in discussing what and why they are learning. Nursery children reflect on their own learning more regularly now using their revised Learning Journeys. Across the primary stages, children confidently describe what they do well and what they need to do to improve. They can describe how they can apply their learning in different ways. Learning is shared more openly with parents and parents would like to see this sharing continue to develop over time. In the nursery Learning Journeys are freely available to parents. The nursery team now needs to develop their plans to include more information on individual progress in the Learning Journeys. In the primary stages, learning is shared in an increasingly varied range of ways including blogs, open afternoons, curriculum newsletters, open assemblies and on-going reporting to parents.

In the primary classes, children are involved in a wider range of working parties and community groups such as the eco group, gardening group, pupil council, Rights Respecting Schools, health promotion and Fair Trade. Involvement in such groups

is leading to increased application of specific skills in other areas of learning. Children continue to respond very well to practical learning opportunities such as the range of experiences provided during the Modern Languages Day. Across the school, children's progress in all learning is being carefully recorded and monitored. This information is used well to inform planning next steps in the nursery and primary. Across the school more children are now making consistent progress with their learning. Expectations throughout the nursery and primary classes of what children can do ensure that there is appropriate challenge for all learners.

Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure children can improve their skills and have the right amount of challenge.

Nursery children, including the newly-enrolled two year olds, are well supported by their key workers. Staff across the school are more confident in planning tasks to match children's abilities. Across the school, children's interests and abilities are now the starting point for learning. Children with additional learning needs are well supported and staff provide good quality support in and out of class. Parents have more regular opportunities to be involved in supporting their children's learning through accessing termly curriculum newsletters, open afternoons and written reports. Parents are able to join in with nursery sessions through stay and play and a popular Nursery Cafe. Staff have a clear understanding of the expectations of Curriculum for Excellence. Many staff now take a leading role in developing aspects of the curriculum. School staff have worked well together to develop a clear and progressive curriculum. This is providing a sound basis for planning learning experiences across the school. The school should continue with the work already underway in engaging with the children and their parents in developing the curriculum.

Nursery children have increased opportunities for outdoor learning with the development of a well-resourced and engaging outdoor area which they freely access daily. They also enjoy their time in the garden area especially in the mud kitchen. Children in the primary stages have increased opportunities for outdoor learning and make better use of their local community. They now make more use of the local beach and estuary environments in their learning. Parents and members of the local community have been involved in sharing their skills and talents with children to enhance and extend their learning. Nursery and early years' primary staff have developed more effective transition arrangements and experiences, which take place throughout the year and involve the local playgroup as well as children from the school's nursery class. Parents reflected positively on this development, notably in developing their children's confidence towards transition.

Ensure all involved in the life of the school are fully engaged in taking forward and, where appropriate, leading improvement in the school and nursery.

The headteacher has firmly established herself across the school community as a highly committed and supportive leader. She has ably led the school through a period of change. This has resulted in improvements in relationships, ethos and teamwork across the whole school community. The school is now a more inclusive, open, welcoming and harmonious learning community. Staff, parents and children are now more fully involved in evaluating what the school does well and what it

needs to do to improve. They are better informed and more able to discuss the school's strengths and next steps. Staff are continuing to develop their use of assessment data to back up their professional judgements when planning learning. The headteacher's thorough and careful monitoring and tracking provides a clear view of individual children's progress. The children are now more meaningfully involved in contributing to the life of the school and to their own learning. Expectations of what and how children's participate in and lead school improvement have increased. Children now bring their own ideas and suggestions to the school unprompted. Parents are now regularly and fully consulted by the school on issues and improvements. They support and contribute to school and class events and are also involved in providing feedback on key aspects of the work of the school through a range of opportunities. They are increasingly involved in taking forward priorities and initiatives. The school is now a more positive community with a shared sense of purpose and with mutual trust established at the heart of everything it does.

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

Alasdair Eadie
HM Inspector

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