

3 June 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In April 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Cockburnspath Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Scottish Borders 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 approaches to leadership of change within the school, creating a stronger culture of self-evaluation to inform and plan improvements. This will help secure better outcomes for all children.

The school has made very good progress in taking this area for improvement forward.

The new headteacher was appointed in June 2024. She provides strong strategic leadership which has led to significant improvements since the original inspection. She has shared her ambitious vision for the school very effectively with children, parents and staff. Across the school, she has established positive relationships based firmly on respect. As such, the climate for learning across the school is now more positive and children's behaviour and engagement in learning have improved. Children are keen to welcome visitors and talk proudly about the work of the school.

The headteacher, ably supported by the principal teacher, provide supportive and transparent leadership. Together, they led a successful review of the school's vision and values. This has resulted in the creation of a new school motto, 'a team that learns together grows, succeeds and smiles together'. This reflects well the ethos and culture of the school.

The headteacher has introduced new ways to take forward school improvement. This includes, making use of national guidance to identify what is working well and what needs to improve. The headteacher is committed to strengthening leadership across the school community. As a result, children, parents/carers and staff now play a greater role in shaping school improvement. The headteacher consults with all stakeholders very effectively and takes positive steps to act on their views and suggestions. Parents/carers are very supportive of the headteacher and are pleased with the positive impact she is having. They appreciate that senior leaders are improving outcomes for all children. They also recognise the improved way senior leaders and staff now communicate with them.

The headteacher recognises the value and importance of establishing strong approaches to monitor the work of the school to secure continuous improvement. It will be important that the pace of change is kept under close review to ensure new developments are embedded fully and most importantly sustained.

Improve approaches to planning and assessment within the school. This will help ensure reliable evidence is gathered about children's progress and used effectively to plan for children's learning.

Strengths, progress and area for further development identified during the visit:

The school has made some progress in taking this area forward.

Senior leaders and staff are taking forward new approaches to planning and assessing children's learning. Teachers plan learning across all curricular areas. This is beginning to ensure that they build more effectively on children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. Staff share information about learning regularly with parents. They provide family learning sessions in different areas of the curriculum, which help to support parents' understanding of how teachers deliver learning.

Senior leaders and staff have developed learning, teaching and assessment guidance to help teachers plan and deliver lessons. Teachers make good use of this guidance, and it is helping to secure greater consistency in learning and teaching approaches. The guidance is also helping teachers to build on children's prior learning more effectively. Senior leaders and staff have made a positive start to develop further approaches to the way they assess children's learning. This is necessary to ensure they make reliable judgements about the progress children are making. It will be helpful for staff to collaborate with teachers in other schools to gain a better understanding of national standards.

In a minority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of lessons and how children can be successful. This is starting to help children understand what they need to do to achieve. It would be beneficial for staff to make these steps more explicit to enable children to gain a better understanding of what they need to do to be successful. This would also enable teachers to provide more helpful feedback to children about their strengths and next steps in learning. A few children would benefit from greater challenge in their learning.

Staff consulted effectively with children and families to develop a shared clear understanding of expectations of how and what children learn. As part of this, senior leaders and staff developed a visual representation of all the learning that takes place in Cockburnspath Primary School. This takes good account and reflects well the unique context, values, and aims of the school.

Continue to develop approaches to promoting and supporting positive relationships and behaviour across the school.

Strengths, progress and area for further development identified during the visit:

The school has made very good progress in taking this area for improvement forward.

Senior leaders have taken a well-planned approach to improve relationships and behaviour across the school. As a result, there is now a calmer and more positive ethos across the school.

Senior leaders and staff are supporting children's wellbeing needs well. They make use of a variety of tools to gain a better understanding of children's wellbeing needs. Senior leaders

and staff use this information to provide children with different ways to manage and regulate their feelings. This includes, wellbeing conversations, 'regulation stations' and cosy spaces. There are a lot of different opportunities for children to experience success across their learning which is also promoting their wellbeing and pride in the school. Positively, staff now regularly share children's learning with their families in creative ways. Parents appreciate greatly the information they now receive about their children's learning and progress.

Specialist staff who work alongside teachers provide good support for individuals and groups of children. This allows children to access learning in different ways and also helps them to have positive relationships with each other. Staff across the school are nurturing and make good use of their professional learning to help children who may require additional support with their learning.

The headteacher identified the need to improve their approaches to outdoor learning. She has taken positive steps to address this. Children now have more regular opportunities to learn outdoors and engage more fully in their rich local context. Parents and local partners take an active role in supporting this and deliver experiences such as football, 'beach clean ups' and gardening in the community.

Improve children's attainment in literacy and numeracy within the school, targeting gaps in children's learning to ensure all children make the best possible progress.

The school has made a positive start in taking this area for improvement forward.

Senior leaders and staff have developed approaches to raising attainment for children. This includes improving the quality of teaching and learning, improving support for children who require additional support with their learning and monitoring more closely children's progress.

Staff have made positive progress in improving attainment in listening and talking and writing. The majority of children are now making expected progress in these areas. Staff have benefited from local authority support and professional learning in the teaching of writing. There remains scope to improve the standard of children's presentation of their work. Teachers need to ensure they have high expectations of children's writing across the curriculum.

Children are capable of achieving more highly in numeracy and mathematics. Staff have undertaken professional learning in approaches to teaching numeracy. The impact of recent professional learning remains at an early stage of development. Teachers should provide children with more regular opportunities to revisit previously taught mathematical concepts. This will help to consolidate their learning. Across the school, children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their learning in numeracy and mathematics in real-life contexts.

Senior leaders have created a robust tracking system that allows them to monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy, and wellbeing throughout the year. In addition, they track children's participation in wider achievement. Senior leaders have introduced regular tracking meetings to discuss children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. As a result, senior leaders and staff are now better at identifying gaps in learning. They use tracking information to provide support to both individuals and different groups of learners to

help them make better progress in learning. As recognised, senior leaders should continue to support staff to develop further their approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to enable all learners to make the best possible progress.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within one year 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 Scottish Borders Council that we intend to take.

Jackie Maley
HM Inspector