

28 February 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Ordiquhill School and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council**

In March 2015, 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 April 2016. 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. 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. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com.

Increase the pace of curriculum development in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

A new permanent headteacher has been in post since August 2016. This has brought much needed stability to the school. In addition, Aberdeenshire Council has provided additional staffing to allow for an extra class to be created enabling staff to better meet needs and address the gaps in attainment. Overall, there is a much more settled climate for learning and in most lessons children's needs are addressed more effectively.

The new headteacher has introduced a renewed focus on developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and on strengthening the curriculum in these areas. An overview of interdisciplinary learning topics is now in place allowing children to develop skills and understanding in a range of topics over time. We ask that staff continue to develop this work and continue to strengthen the curriculum to ensure children are able to effectively build on their previous learning in all subject areas as they move through the school.

Staff in the nursery are now using early level local authority progression plans. Staff plan learning which takes account of all areas of the curriculum. They consult children about their interests and ideas to help shape and inform learning. Staff will benefit from refreshing their knowledge and understanding of Building the Ambition

guidance to develop their knowledge and understanding of what is required to improve the curriculum and develop high quality learning in the nursery.

Improve the use of assessment information to ensure tasks and activities provide appropriate challenge for all children.

The newly appointed headteacher and staff have worked well together to develop a common approach to assessing children's progress. Staff meet regularly with the headteacher throughout the term to discuss children's progress and plan appropriate support and challenge. Most staff are using this information well to match activities to children's abilities allowing them to improve their attainment. Most staff provide regular feedback to children on how they can improve their work. The quality of learning and teaching in most classes continues to improve with most children now more engaged in their learning. We ask that staff continue to build on this good work and share good practice across the school. There is still scope to improve the pace of learning in a few lessons. We ask that the school sustain a clear focus on raising attainment for all children.

As planned, nursery staff should refresh the learning environment to make it more inviting and stimulating. Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop their problem solving, creativity and enquiry skills. Staff need to also ensure that 'together times' are not too lengthy, particularly for the youngest children.

Raise standards of attainment and ensure all children's learning needs are met.

The headteacher and staff have a renewed focus on tracking children's attainment and meeting the needs of all learners by identifying gaps in learning. There is a more purposeful learning climate across the school. As a result, children are making better progress in learning. Across the school, children's behaviour has significantly improved. In a number of lessons children work well in pairs and groups. Children report that they are now enjoying school more and they appreciate the calmer and more purposeful climate. Staff are working hard to identify and address the gaps in children's learning. The teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and in mathematics and numeracy is now a feature of daily programmes. In numeracy and mathematics, staff are revisiting topics to ensure children are making appropriate progress at their level. They have a clearer picture of children's attainment and progress and are now making better use of assessment data to track and plan for children's learning. Staff value the support given to them by the headteacher to enable them to interpret assessment data. There is a need to review approaches to support for learning and the deployment of staff to ensure a clearer focus on raising attainment.

Improve leadership and approaches to self-evaluation to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for children.

Approaches to self-evaluation have improved considerably since our last visit. The new headteacher has quickly identified appropriate priorities for improvement. These include improving the quality of learning and teaching across the school, raising attainment and fostering positive relationships with staff and parents. There

are positive signs that good progress has been made in taking these priorities forward. More time will be required to fully measure the impact of new developments. Staff in the nursery class would benefit from visiting other early years settings to identify and share good practice. In addition, by making use of How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?, staff will be able to help them measure the quality of the nursery class. The headteacher visits the nursery daily. She recognises that the nursery class now needs the same level of monitoring as the other classes.

The newly appointed headteacher is valued by the school community. They appreciate her direction and leadership. She has provided the school with much needed stability. She has a clear vision for this school and is sharing this effectively with staff and partners. She has high expectations for all learners and challenges and supports staff to ensure they too have similar expectations. She is supporting staff to undertake key leadership roles within the school.

We ask Aberdeenshire Council to take steps to inform the school community, through letters and posters, of the council's policy on dealing with aggressive behaviour towards staff in schools.

What happens next?

The school has made some good progress since the original inspection. Further work needs done to ensure the work has an impact on attainment, that there is consistent high quality across all lessons and that improvements are sustained over time. We will liaise with Aberdeenshire Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within a year of the published report. We will discuss with Aberdeenshire Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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