

16 September 2025

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. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in September 2024. 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.

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

Led effectively by the acting headteacher, staff have made positive progress in this area for improvement. Overall children's attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved. A majority of younger children and most children at the middle and upper stages are now on track to achieve nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy. Most children across all stages now make expected progress in literacy.

The acting headteacher has worked well with staff to implement a new tracking system for literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. This is providing a more holistic overview of children's strengths and needs. Staff now meet three times a year with the acting headteacher to monitor and discuss the progress of all children towards achieving nationally expected levels. As a result, teachers' professional judgments of progress and attainment have improved.

The acting headteacher and staff have correctly identified the need to improve approaches to meet the learning needs for children who are capable of achieving more.

The acting headteacher and staff have developed an effective and consistent approach to planning and using assessments to identify children's progress. This includes a clear assessment calendar which provides an overview of the range of assessments used in literacy and numeracy. Staff use information gathered from these assessments effectively to plan for meeting the needs of most children.

Staff's approaches to assessing children's progress are impacting positively on the quality of information shared as children move from nursery into P1 and from P7 to secondary. Staff recognise the need to develop the same approach for stage-to-stage transition to support all children to make the best possible progress.

The acting headteacher tracks robustly, children's attendance. Attendance is carefully monitored each month where any concerns are identified and acted upon. As a result, attendance has improved and is in line with local and national levels.

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

Staff have made effective progress in developing a shared understanding of national standards.

Teachers now make better use of the national Benchmarks to support them in planning for assessment and to understand national standards. Staff have engaged in moderation activities with colleagues in school focussing on writing. In addition, teachers have worked with colleagues across other schools to moderate standards in reading. Due to the multi-composite nature of the school, teachers have benefitted from discussions with colleagues from other schools who teach the same stage. This is resulting in an increased and shared understanding of standards. Teachers now base decisions about children's attainment levels using national guidance alongside the outcome of assessments of children's learning. This is leading to more robust data on children's progress being gathered and used 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 positive progress in this area. Since appointment in August 2024, the acting headteacher has focussed attention to improving relationships, children's behaviour and their motivation to learn. As a result of these changes to children's experiences, children are beginning to experience a pace of learning which is brisker and better matched to their needs.

The acting headteacher has provided helpful guidance and expectations to improve teachers' approaches to planning high quality learning and teaching. Staff use this guidance well and are developing more responsive approaches to planning as a result. In addition, this guidance provides staff with increased clarity about the key drivers and approaches expected to improve learning and teaching experiences. Teachers engage children in meaningful dialogue and reflection about what they would like to learn. This is allowing children to have more of a say in their learning.

The acting headteacher has swiftly established trusting relationships with staff, children, partners and parents. She has worked effectively with the school community to refresh the school's vision, values and aims which are referred to regularly and displayed across the school. Children have a strong understanding of these and talk positively about them. They are proud of their achievements in promoting these values which are recognised in weekly awards known as 'shout outs' and 'magic moments'. These recognitions demonstrate well children's understanding of the high expectations set by staff of children's behaviour and has created a more positive culture for learning in classes. There has been a notable improvement in levels of engagement and children's attitudes to learning. Almost all children now learn in calm, purposeful environments where they are engaged and motivated to learn. As a result of this work, there are clear improvements in learning and teaching across the school which are improving the pace of learning.

Children benefit from consistent approaches used by teachers to sharing the purpose of learning in lessons. In most lessons, teachers share with children how they can be

successful. Children are increasing their ability to talk about what they are learning and how they can be successful as a result. Teachers use questioning well to develop children's thinking skills in most lessons. This is resulting in children having greater clarity about the learning process and improving the pace of learning well.

Teachers provide helpful feedback to children, linked well to the purpose of the lesson and how children can be successful. This is supporting children effectively to articulate their successes and next steps. Going forward, staff should now provide feedback to children about their learning across other areas of the curriculum. In addition, teachers should look at ways to support children to use their feedback to set learning targets for improvement.

The acting headteacher has provided clear and succinct guidance and expectations for teachers' approaches to planning. All teachers use local authority learning pathways to plan learning progressively across the curriculum, over different timescales. The acting headteacher monitors carefully teachers' plans and evaluations. She meets with teachers regularly to discuss their plans and provides effective feedback to support improvement further. As a result, teachers now plan, evaluate and review learning more effectively which is improving the pace of learning for almost all children.

Teachers use assessment information well to identify gaps in children's learning. They work with support for learning staff to identify supportive interventions for a minority of children. In a majority of lessons, learning activities are well matched to the needs of most children. However, there is scope to increase further additional challenge for a few learners exceeding expected levels of attainment.

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

Judith Reid
HM Inspector