

5 June 2018

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 further letters in April 2016 and February 2017. 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 learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found:

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

Practitioners in the early years class are making greater use of Building the Ambition guidance to provide a more appropriate curriculum. Improvements across the indoor and outdoor learning environment are clearly evident. Children are now able to sustain their play for longer periods of time resulting in richer and deeper learning. There is a greater recognition of the need to be responsive to children's interests and stage of development in planning for learning.

Across the primary stages, children are more actively involved in their learning. Staff work hard to provide interesting contexts for learning. There is a clear focus on developing children's skills in literacy and numeracy. Staff now have clearer progression pathways in place to allow children to build on prior learning more effectively. Staff have made a good start to engaging with the benchmarks to establish the standard expected across the curriculum. They should now seek to establish more ongoing links with other schools. This will help staff share expectations to support them in making more robust judgements on the standard for achieving a Curriculum for Excellence level. The teaching of reading and writing skills across the school has improved. Staff have worked hard to ensure when subjects are taught together through topics, there a balance in experience across the year. Children now have more frequent opportunities to develop their digital skills. Older children have developed skills in coding and were successful in a recent local authority inter-schools coding competition when applying these skills. A range of

after-school clubs has now been re-established. There is still scope to develop a progression pathway for health and wellbeing and to maintain a focus on anti-bullying as some parents and children still feel this is an issue across the school.

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

Practitioners in the early years class have improved their approaches to making judgements about children's progress. They make better observations of children's learning. They now capture children's significant learning more successfully. Next steps are identified for individual children and taken forward in planning. There is a greater focus on supporting and challenging children in their learning. For a few children who require greater challenge, there is variety of contexts available to extend their thinking. Practitioners also skilfully interact with children to increase the level of challenge as children play.

Overall, in the primary classes lessons, tasks and activities are of an appropriate level for most children. Staff are using assessment information more effectively to inform their planned learning. We ask that they continue to develop ongoing assessment linked more to learning and teaching to supplement the standardised assessments. The arrangements to support children receiving additional help are now more effective. A member of staff has taken on responsibility for supporting children with a range of interventions and for ensuring individual educational plans are now in place and reviewed regularly. Support staff are now more effectively deployed in supporting children's learning more directly. As a result, children are more settled in class and are working more at an appropriate pace. A few children are supported by interventions to support emotional and social development. We ask that this is developed more fully to ensure it is appropriate for all children and that their progress is tracked appropriately.

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

There is now clearer leadership and direction to the work of the school and the early years class. Staff across the school and the early years class are more confident and reflective. They make better use of national guidance and frameworks to support their work. This is done in a planned and measured way. Staff identify different quality indicators as a focus to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved. There is evidence that this approach is impacting positively on the provision, for example, the improved outdoor learning and the quality of learning in classes. More formal observation of classes across the school and the early years setting would help support improvement further.

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

In the early years class, there is now a greater focus on developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Children engage with environmental print as part of their daily routines. Practitioners use sensitive questioning to promote children's vocabulary. We observed children making good use of subject-specific vocabulary

related to their current interest on space. Children created their own stories about the junk models they had made. Children have good opportunities for counting as part of their routines.

Staff are aware of the gaps in children's learning and have taken steps to address these. Attainment for most children is improving though there is still scope to improve this further. Children now experience learning across a range of the organisers in literacy. However, in mathematics children need to develop further their skills in problem solving, information handling, probability and chance. We have asked staff to ensure that when teaching mathematics and numeracy that enough time is spent on consolidating and reinforcing concepts to ensure children are secure in their learning. More able children need to experience breadth in their learning before moving onto the next Curriculum for Excellence level.

### **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.

Sadie Cushley  
HM Inspector

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