

23 April 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on St Ninian's Episcopal Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Perth and Kinross Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the new headteacher and staff. We heard from the new 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 support all children to make progress in their learning, teachers and practitioners should improve approaches to planning, assessment and moderation in the school and nursery. They should ensure that learning is progressive and clearly based on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. There is a need to develop a shared understanding of what children's progress looks like within and across CfE levels.

Supported well by the new headteacher, the staff team has taken positive steps in improving these aspects of their work. Staff are now more confident in planning children's learning linked to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. As a result, children now experience a broader curriculum. Teachers now plan effectively to meet the needs of all children and include assessment as part of their planning process. This includes working more effectively with support assistants and support for learning teachers to plan appropriately for children who require additional support with their learning. As a result, all children are now making appropriate progress in their learning.

Teachers now use a wider range of approaches to assess children's learning and monitor their progress. This enables teachers to identify gaps in learning promptly and provide additional help where it is required. Practitioners in the nursery now observe more closely children's learning and the specific skills they are developing. They make good use of these observations to make judgements about children's progress and identify appropriate next steps in learning. As a result of these new approaches, children's needs across the nursery and the school are better met and they are making better progress in their learning.

Staff work well together as a team to ensure consistency in their planning and tracking progress in children's learning. Working together, staff have developed approaches to ensure their shared understanding of national standards and expectations. This is ensuring that teacher judgements of children's progress and attainment are now more robust and reliable. Moving forward, staff should engage with teachers across the local area group and beyond to strengthen their understanding of national standards, particularly across the early level.

Continue to develop approaches to tracking and monitoring of children's progress. Teachers and practitioners should improve how observations, assessment data and other key information is used to help raise attainment and achievement for all learners.

The staff team has worked well together to make strong progress in this area for improvement since the original inspection.

The staff team are now planning more effectively for children to ensure that they make appropriate progress and experience the right level of challenge. They are now more focussed on what support children need to achieve their expected levels and use a range of assessments and observations to identify any gaps in learning.

Teachers and senior leaders meet regularly to review children's progress. They are now more clearly focussed on what support children need to achieve well. The support for learning teacher works very closely with class teachers to identify and support children's needs through a range of interventions. These inputs are evaluated regularly to ensure they are making the appropriate impact on individual children.

Teachers and practitioners now use tracking data more robustly to assess the progress and attainment of children across the year. They are using this data to ensure that identified gaps in learning, these are addressed and supported well in classes. All of this work supports children to make progress in their learning.

To support effective communication further, senior leaders should include the support for learning teacher and pupil support assistants where possible, at attainment meetings.

Ensure that the nursery team benefits from strong leadership and direction. The nursery class should be included in whole school strategic planning for continuous improvement.

The new headteacher provides strong strategic leadership and direction which is leading to significant improvement across the nursery setting. As a result, staff have made very strong progress in this area for improvement. The staff team values greatly the support they now receive from the new headteacher.

The new headteacher supports the staff team effectively to identify what is working well in the setting and areas still requiring improvement. This is supporting the new headteacher and staff team together to take forward areas for improvement successfully. The new headteacher ensures that the nursery is now included in the whole school's plan for continuous improvement.

The new headteacher is a visible leader and ensures she spends time in the nursery setting. She supports practitioners well to continue to improve their practice. Practitioners meet with the new headteacher termly to discuss children's individual progress and plan next steps in learning. This is supporting the staff team to have a better understanding of children's individual progress and next steps in learning.

There is a strong sense of teamwork across the team. All practitioners demonstrate an aspiration to improve outcomes for children and their families. Practitioners are keen to take

forward new developments. For example, a few practitioners are leading targeted intervention support groups. These groups are helping children new to the setting, to develop key early communication skills. Practitioners along with the new headteacher monitor the impact of these targeted interventions.

Practitioners now make more effective use of national guidance and self-evaluation tools to audit their practice. They appreciate the opportunities they have to share good practice with colleagues from other settings. Practitioners access a range of relevant professional learning opportunities which they embrace and put into practice to support children to make better progress in their learning. Practitioners are proud of the improvements they have made since the original inspection. As recognised by the new headteacher, it will be important that senior leaders maintain robust quality assurance approaches to ensure new developments are sustained and delivered in a consistent way.

What happens next?

The school and nursery class have made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school and nursery class have the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Perth and Kinross Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Teri McIntosh
HM Inspector