

24 June 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Aboyne Primary 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 2024. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteachers and staff. We heard from the headteachers 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.

Establish effective approaches to evaluate the quality of the school's work.

There has been significant improvement in the approaches used to evaluate the quality of the school's work.

Senior leaders have a clear, shared vision for the strategic improvement of the school. Following the appointment of the substantive headteachers, all staff developed quickly a very positive working ethos. They share a strong focus on improving the work of the school and outcomes for all children. As a result, the pace of change has increased, and improvements are becoming increasingly embedded across the school.

Senior leaders conduct a wide range of activities to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. All teachers have developed and agreed frameworks of expectations for high quality learning and teaching and children's work. Senior leaders use these frameworks effectively as a focus for monitoring activities. They visit classes regularly to observe learning and teaching, review children's work in jotters and meet termly with teachers to discuss children's progress. All teachers use *How good is our school?* 4th edition (HGIOS4) regularly to evaluate the work of the school. These monitoring and evaluating activities are helping senior leaders to gather clear information about the quality of the work of the school. They use this data well to identify clear areas for school improvement.

All children in P4 to P7 are included in pupil leadership groups, such as pupil council, 'Rota Kids' and Rights Respecting group. They consult with their peers about the work of the school in their chosen area and develop clear action plans for improvement. For example, children in the school clubs group surveyed their peers about what clubs they would like in school. They have recently started a well-attended pupil-led board games club as a result of their findings. As a next step, senior leaders should involve all staff, children and parents more fully in evaluating the work of the school.

In the nursery, senior leaders and practitioners continue to quality assure all aspects of the work of the nursery. The headteachers should now support senior leaders in the nursery with these quality assurance activities. This should help them to ensure approaches to quality

assurance are of a consistently high standard across the school and nursery and have a positive impact on outcomes for children.

Improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure a consistently high quality for all children across the school. This should include reviewing approaches to planning for each curriculum area to ensure children experience progression in their learning.

Senior leaders and teachers have made strong progress in developing effective approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. All teachers have developed and agreed frameworks of expectations for high quality learning and teaching and children's work. This has helped them to develop a shared understanding of the expectations for high quality learning and teaching across the school. As a result, the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school has improved. Almost all children are now included, motivated and engage well in their learning.

All teachers have engaged in helpful professional learning about high-quality approaches to learning and teaching. For example, teachers have engaged in professional learning about making the purpose of learning clear for children. Consequently, in most lessons the purpose of learning is shared effectively with children. All teachers help children to understand how they will know if they have been successful in their learning. This is helping most children to say what they are learning and what they need to do next to help them to make progress.

In a few lessons, teachers help children to understand the skills they are developing as they learn, such as collaboration or communication. In almost all lessons, teachers ask questions to check children's understanding. They now need to develop this further to help children to explain and justify their answers. Teachers should ensure they match children's learning better to their individual needs to ensure all children are appropriately supported or challenged as they learn.

All teachers have reviewed and refreshed classroom environments. Children enjoy referring to helpful learning walls where there are examples of their past work. They use these displays well help them use prior knowledge to support new learning. Children can access quiet areas in every classroom which help them to calm their emotions if they require to do so.

All teachers have worked together well to develop clear and consistently high-quality approaches to assessment across the school. They use a range of assessments such as direct observation, periodic and standardised assessments to assess children's learning. They use data gathered from assessment well to identify gaps in children's learning and provide targeted support for those who require it. All teachers now have a more robust knowledge of the progress children in their class are making in literacy and numeracy. They should now extend assessment approaches to all curriculum areas.

All teachers now use progression frameworks, linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes to plan children's learning across all curriculum areas. As a result, all children are experiencing a broad curriculum which builds on what they already know. Teachers ask children what they already know and what they would like to learn next. This supports children to be more motivated, engaged and active in their learning.

Improve children's learning experiences, progress, and attainment across all areas of the curriculum, particularly in literacy and English language and numeracy and mathematics.

There has been effective progress in this area.

All children benefit from a wide range of learning experiences. They engage well when working individually, in pairs and small groups. Each week, all children develop their skills and knowledge as they learn outdoors. For example, they develop skills of teamwork and communication as they build dens and make pictures using natural materials. All children have regular opportunities to use digital technology to enhance their learning. For example, children use digital software creatively to code small computers to carry out simple tasks, such as creating a motion and light sensor. Children who require additional support with reading and writing benefit from technology which helps them to access and write texts.

This academic session, senior leaders have invested in a range of new reading resources. All teachers have engaged with professional learning to support consistently high-quality approaches to teaching reading. As a result, children are more engaged in reading and the majority of children are now on track to achieve expected CfE levels. As planned, senior leaders should now develop further approaches to teaching numeracy and mathematics across the school.

All teachers now have clear data about the progress each child is making in literacy and numeracy. They use this data carefully to plan learning to meet the needs of all children. Senior leaders and teachers now meet termly to track and monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Together, they identify and target where children have gaps in their learning. The majority of children across the school are now on track to achieve appropriate CfE levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. As planned, teachers now need to track and monitor children's progress across the curriculum.

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

There has been sustained and strong improvement in approaches to promoting and supporting positive relationships and behaviour across the school.

The standard of children's behaviour has improved. Almost all children now behave well in classrooms and in the playground. All staff have increased expectations of the quality of children's behaviour. Across the school, a calm, welcoming ethos is evident, enabling most children to settle quickly to their learning.

Children in all classes have worked together to develop class charters linked to children's rights. All teachers have engaged in professional learning about supporting children to understand their emotions. Children are becoming increasingly confident in identifying and explaining their own emotions. This is helping them to understand the behaviour and feelings of others better. In all classes, teachers have developed calm spaces which children use well when they need time and space to regulate their emotions.

Staff provide effective targeted support for a few children who require help to manage their behaviour in and out of class. These children have clear targeted plans in place to support them. These plans support children to understand what they need to do to behave well and help them develop positive relationships with their peers.

As planned, senior leaders should now review and refresh the positive relationships policy and develop a new anti-bullying policy. All teachers need to work with all pupils to help them understand what constitutes bullying and steps they can take to reduce this across the school. They should ensure they involve fully all staff, parents and children in the development of the positive relationships and anti-bullying policies.

Improve approaches to supporting children who need extra help with their learning. This should include a review of the assessment and identification of individual need.

Staff have made strong progress in improving approaches to supporting children who require additional support with their learning.

Senior leaders carefully reviewed the needs of all children across the school. There is now a comprehensive overview of children's learning needs. Senior leaders review and update this twice a year. They share the overview with all teachers regularly. This is helping to ensure all teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of all children in their class and are fully involved with the support in place. When required, teachers attend professional learning provided by partner agencies which helps them to develop and use strategies and approaches to support individual children. This is helping them to provide support in class which meets the needs of all children.

Senior leaders hold regular review meetings for children who require additional support with their learning. Parents, children and partners from other agencies are included in these meetings. As a result of the discussions at these meetings, additional support for learning staff and class teachers develop clear plans for children which have specific, achievable, time-measurable targets. All teachers have engaged in professional learning about writing individual education plans for children. As a next step, class teachers should take greater responsibility for writing the individual plans for children in their class.

All children who access the complex needs and enhanced provision are settled and happy in school. Teachers are beginning to use the Aberdeenshire Framework for Complex Needs to plan learning for children who attend the provision and track their progress. This is beginning to help them to ensure they are planning clearly to help children make the best possible progress.

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.

Katharine Crombie
HM Inspector