

27 May 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In April 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Quarryhill Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeen City Council. 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.

Practitioners should build on their very recent, positive start to improving approaches to learning and teaching in the nursery. This will ensure experiences engage, motivate and challenge all learners appropriately.

The staff team has made strong progress in addressing this area for improvement. Practitioners create a caring and inclusive ethos within the nursery and work well together to support children's individual needs. Children enjoy their time in nursery.

Senior leaders and practitioners have created a nurturing, stimulating learning environment, which supports children to engage in their play. Spaces for rest and relaxation are now available for all children. A purposeful, well-resourced sensory area provides children with the time and space to self-regulate their emotions. This has resulted in spaces that are well planned, purposeful, and meaningful. Children are using them well to develop their interests and interact with their friends. Practitioners should continue to develop a greater range of literacy and numeracy rich activities to ensure that experiences challenge all learners appropriately.

Children and practitioners have worked well together to enhance the provision in the outdoors. Practitioners have listened to and acted upon children's views. For instance, children contributed to the development of the road area by adding petrol pumps. Children are enthusiastic and motivated when using the range of bicycles. They recognise and discuss safety at the pedestrian crossings and enjoy navigating the roundabout areas. Children access the outdoors and engage in a range of learning experiences daily. Children are actively involved in tidying and clearing the garden area of rubbish and are encouraged to care for living things outdoors. This is helping them to foster a sense of responsibility for their environment. Practitioners are at the early stages of encouraging children to take greater ownership of their learning. As planned, practitioners should support children to take more responsibility for setting up and tidying away resources in all areas of the nursery.

Staff have recently engaged in significant professional learning, including visits to a variety of nurseries. They have used these opportunities to inform how they enhance children's learning experiences.

Practitioners now make greater use of digital tools to record children's achievements. They use an online platform well to document children's progress and share learning with families. Staff value children's learning by displaying artwork, construction projects, and photographs of their engagement in learning activities in an attractive and meaningful way. Children have rich opportunities to share their learning with each other through learning walls. Practitioners and children should continue to work together to ensure these are effective and children are making more choices about what is recorded and shared.

Practitioners have improved how they plan and assess children's learning. Approaches to planning now take better account of children's particular interests. There is now a more appropriate balance between responsive and planned learning that supports children to build on their prior learning. Practitioners listen attentively to children and provide them with the time and space needed to deepen their understanding when answering questions. Senior leaders have created a useful tracking tool. This is enabling staff to identify gaps in children's learning and plan effectively to address these areas.

Develop high-quality learning and teaching, using topics which children find interesting. Teachers need to adopt a greater range of approaches to teaching, which motivate children more in their learning.

Almost all teachers have engaged in comprehensive professional learning to help them improve their approaches to learning and teaching. Almost all teachers are now beginning to apply these approaches regularly. This is supporting children to engage more meaningfully in their learning. Teachers need to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure children's learning is interesting and motivating. A minority of children self-assess their learning to reflect on their progress. Most teachers are beginning to develop their approaches to providing effective written feedback in writing. Teachers should continue to improve the quality of feedback they provide to children to help them understand better their strengths and what they need to do to improve.

In most classes, children experience positive relationships with both staff and their peers. Children are polite and respectful most of the time. Staff now have a greater awareness of children's individual learning needs. All staff need to continue to develop the school's approach to developing positive relationships across the whole school community. Almost all children behave well at most times. A few children struggle to cope with their feelings, which results in them becoming dysregulated. In a few instances this can lead to periods of disruption to class lessons and disagreements in the playground. Senior leaders need to continue to support staff to develop their approaches to managing children's behaviour to ensure disruption to learning is minimised.

Senior leaders have established a range of spaces for small group support across the school. Staff deliver targeted, effective support to help children regulate their emotions and reengage in their learning. Staff have undertaken professional learning in nurturing approaches. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to implement these across the school to help improve how children understand and manage their emotions better.

Teachers provide most children with opportunities to discuss and share ideas in pairs or small groups, demonstrating a strong level of cooperation when working with others. Too many lessons are still teacher led. As a result, a few children lose focus during learning

tasks. Teachers need to increase the pace of learning. They need to ensure lessons engage and motivate children in their learning more effectively. Teachers should consider how to involve all children more fully in planning learning, including giving children regular opportunities to lead their own learning.

Teachers working at the early stages are continuing to develop their understanding of play. They have created spaces that provide increasingly supportive and enriching learning opportunities. As a result, the majority of children remain engaged and focused during play. As planned, staff should continue to improve the balance of adult-directed and child-led activities.

Develop how teachers evaluate children's progress. Teachers need to use the information they gather to plan learning which provides all children with greater challenge.

Senior leaders have implemented an assessment calendar following the previous inspection. Teachers are beginning to use this calendar to ensure checks on children's progress are carried out at key points throughout the year. They are beginning to explore how this information can be used to support their judgement of a child's progress. Information on children's progress is at the early stages of providing teachers with a holistic picture of each child's progress. Senior leaders need to continue to support teachers to use information on children's progress to plan learning which provides children with increased levels of challenge.

Teachers have undertaken a few opportunities recently to develop their understanding of national standards. They recognise their need to extend their knowledge beyond the school. Senior leaders need to continue to support teachers to develop their skills and confidence in making professional judgements of children's attainment of a level. This should include providing opportunities for teachers to work alongside colleagues from other local primary schools.

The headteacher has introduced regular attainment meetings. Senior leaders meet with teachers, where they discuss individual children's progress. These discussions are beginning to help teachers to identify children who may require additional challenge or support. This is beginning to help them to consider how they can adapt lessons to support children to access their learning better.

Raise attainment in literacy and numeracy across the school. This should include ensuring that targeted approaches to support children are successfully closing gaps in children's learning.

Senior leaders and teachers now gather information on children's progress regularly throughout the year. This is helping them have more accurate information on children's progress. This is not yet improving children's attainment sufficiently well. Staff now need to use assessment information more regularly and effectively to improve children's progress and attainment.

Teachers have begun developing a range of approaches to how they plan to improve literacy across the school. These are at the early stages of development and need time to be

implemented across the school consistently. A few teachers are continuing to develop the school library. They are creating an action plan to develop a love of reading across the school. Initiatives to develop phonics, comprehension and reading skills throughout the school are beginning to impact positively on children's literacy skills. Children at all stages need to develop their listening and talking skills further. There is still a need for children to improve the presentation of their written work. Teachers are developing their understanding of how to teach mathematical concepts. Senior leaders need to continue to support teachers to take forward these key areas for development to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy.

Senior leaders use pupil equity funding (PEF) to fund additional staffing, staff professional learning and spaces within the school focussed on supporting children struggling in school in some way. Additional spaces are particularly focussed on supporting children with autism or those who struggle to regulate their emotions. A school counsellor supports children to develop their resilience when facing difficult situations. A mental health charity worker also supports parents who may be finding it difficult to send their child to school. A family support worker runs sessions to help parents who may find these helpful. Senior leaders, with the support of the local authority, now need to ensure that targeted approaches to support children are successfully closing gaps in children's learning. Senior leaders should consider how to involve parents more in identifying how PEF can be used across the school.

Senior leaders have struggled to recruit additional support for learning staff. This is having a detrimental effect on the school's ability to support children requiring additional support. Senior leaders have identified a strategy to help address this issue. Senior leaders, with the support of the local authority, need to move forward with their plans to address this issue.

What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Aberdeen City Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Aberdeen City 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.

Graeme Gordon
HM Inspector