

8 September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Banchory 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 and June 2025. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher/head of setting and staff. We heard from the headteacher/head of setting 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 to find out the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

**Senior leaders need to work with staff across the school to provide clear, strategic leadership. This leadership should result in focused improvement priorities to improve children's progress and attainment across all areas of the curriculum. There is a need for improved communication across the school to ensure a shared understanding of expectations and standards.**

Overall, positive progress has been made towards this area of improvement.

The acting headteacher has made a positive difference to the implementation of identified improvements across the school. Staff are reassured by his leadership and guidance. He has established clear remits for all members of the senior leadership team and shared these roles with all staff. This has helped to strengthen communication across the school.

Communication between home and school has also been strengthened. A weekly online newsletter includes important information about how children learn. Each class develops and shares a termly learning leaflet with parents to highlight what children will be learning during that time. Parents also have access to a newly developed parental involvement calendar, which outlines opportunities for parents to engage in the life of the school.

Senior leaders have worked with staff to develop a school improvement plan which outlines the current improvement priorities. These priorities have been well considered to improve children's progress and attainment. Staff are aware of the current priorities and the expected impact on improving outcomes for children. School improvement priorities are also shared regularly with children and parents through assemblies and online newsletters. Senior leaders should now support teachers to take forward aspects of school improvement in a structured and consistent way.



Across the school, staff have a better understanding of behaviour expectations and promoting positive behaviour. Pupil Support Assistants meet regularly with the acting headteacher to discuss individual children's needs and what strategies are in place to support them. Processes are in place to check if support strategies for children are successful or need to be amended. This has helped to ensure a more consistent approach to supporting children across the school. Most staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the key needs of individual children.

**Senior leaders should establish robust approaches to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's work. There is a need for senior leaders to take greater managerial oversight of the nursery, primary stages and enhanced provision as a whole school community.**

Overall, positive progress has been made in this area for improvement.

The acting headteacher has developed a calendar of activities to be led by the senior leadership team, across the school. Information gathered from these activities is used to identify what is going well across the school and what needs to improve. Key messages from these activities are discussed with all staff and are used to inform school improvement. They provide clear evidence of the impact of current priorities and is beginning to identify future improvement priorities.

The acting headteacher has engaged staff in professional learning to improve their understanding of what quality learning and teaching looks like. This is beginning to have a positive impact in most classes. Staff use the recently developed learning, teaching and assessment impact map to ensure more focused professional discussions. These discussions focus on the strengths and next steps identified through learning visits. The use of this whole school tool is helping to promote an improved consistency towards learning and teaching.

Senior leaders are visible in classrooms and learning spaces, both indoors and outdoors. They also undertake regular learning visits to all classes. Moving forward, staff should take a closer look at children's learning experiences at all stages to ensure learning time is used well and children benefit from high quality learning and teaching across the week. Senior leaders and teachers should have a stronger focus on observing individual children's experience as an important feature of monitoring learning and teaching.

Senior leaders have reviewed approaches to supporting children with additional support needs (ASN) across the school and in the enhanced provision. This includes the use of additional learning spaces and the deployment of staff. Improved approaches to checking children's progress supports helps senior leaders and teachers to identify appropriate strategies to help children to manage their emotions and behaviours. This is having a positive impact on children who need extra support and ensures calm learning environments across the school. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that parents and children are involved in creating plans and evaluating the progress made towards agreed targets regularly.

**Improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure all children receive a consistently high-quality learning experience across the school. This should include a whole school focus on assessment and achieving national standards. There is a need for a specific review of approaches to learning and teaching at early level.**

Overall, positive progress has been made in this area of improvement.

The acting headteacher has supported all staff to engage in regular professional learning. As a result, staff are improving their understanding of effective learning and teaching. The 'Banchory Primary School Learning, Teaching and Assessment Impact Map' outlines expectations for all staff around learning and teaching. This guidance is in the early stages of being used to support learning visits. All staff should ensure they continue to refer to the structures and processes included in this map to ensure a more consistent approach to high-quality learning and teaching.

Teachers working at the early stages continue to develop their understanding of play-based learning. They create well-designed play environments which support children's curiosity in learning. Teachers have worked together to create a framework which sets out clear expectations for the development of play and learning across P1 and P2. They now need to ensure there is a shared understanding of how they will implement this framework to improve outcomes for all children.

Teachers share with children what they are learning and how they will know they have been successful in their learning. They use questioning well to check children's understanding. Teachers continue to develop their understanding of pace and challenge to ensure all children remain engaged in learning. They should continue to develop approaches to ensure children experience learning that is well matched to their needs and abilities.

Staff have recently reviewed how they assess children's progress. They are beginning to make good use of the information gathered from assessments to plan appropriate next steps for children. Most teachers provide feedback to children. This includes written and verbal feedback. Teachers need to continue to develop their understanding of what high-quality written feedback looks like. This should ensure children are clear about what they need to do to improve their learning.

Teachers are becoming increasingly familiar with using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to inform their planning. They use local authority progressive planners to plan learning across most areas of the curriculum. A few staff plan together. Teachers should consider their unique school context and community when planning children's learning experiences across the curriculum. This should support children to further develop their skills in real-life contexts, relevant to them.

## 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.

Elaine Gallagher  
HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.