

5 May 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In January 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Preston Lodge High School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and East Lothian Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people 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. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

The headteacher should lead and develop a clear overview of all areas of the school. He needs to put in place effective methods for gathering evidence to identify the school's own strengths and areas for improvement. This should lead to clear priorities for improving the school and these should be agreed with staff, parents and young people.

Senior leaders have initiated positive changes which are not yet embedded well enough to demonstrate sufficient progress in this area.

The headteacher has worked well with senior leaders to lead the development of more effective processes to improve learners' experiences and outcomes. This includes clarifying how senior leaders carry out their roles and responsibilities. Middle leaders are motivated to lead improvements in their curricular areas. Senior leaders should continue to develop the capacity of staff, parents and young people to lead appropriate aspects of school improvement.

Senior leaders have implemented a more structured and well-planned approach to gather self-evaluation evidence. At present, the focus of self-evaluation activities is too broad and not always targeted towards identifying or reviewing specific improvement priorities.

Senior leaders have refined the school improvement planning processes. Most priorities identified in the whole school and curricular area improvement plans are now clearer with more measurable targets.

Senior leaders strengthened recently processes for gathering stakeholder views. The Parent Council is considering how to capture a greater range of parent views. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop further their methods of capturing all young people and parents' views. They should continue to ensure that stakeholders are aware of how their views inform ongoing school improvement.

Senior leaders should ensure a whole school focus on providing tasks and activities which are set at the right level of difficulty for all young people. This should help ensure all young people's learning needs are met more effectively. All staff should work together to raise attainment for all young people from S1 to S6.

The school has made progress in establishing a framework to develop tasks and activities set at the right level for young people. Staff have had insufficient time to develop and embed these approaches to demonstrate that they are making a positive impact on young people. There remains a need to raise attainment across the school and this continues to be an important area which requires significant improvement.

Senior leaders and staff have worked well to refine and agree a consistent approach to learning and teaching across the school. They have introduced the Preston Lodge Learning Promise, which staff are beginning to use to frame lessons. This work is leading to a more consistent approach in how teachers structure lessons.

In almost all lessons, young people behave well and participate in learning activities. The pace of learning is overly led by the teacher and too slow for the majority of young people. Most staff need to use information about young people's additional support needs more effectively to plan appropriate learning experiences.

Senior leaders have put in place new processes and supports for teachers to reduce the number of young people who request to change the level of the courses they are following. This has led to increases in the percentage of young people presented for a greater number of courses from S4 to S6.

Overall, data for young people who left school in 2023/24 indicates a slight improvement in literacy and numeracy attainment. However, attainment for cohorts of young people in the senior phase needs to improve. Senior leaders need to focus on what will make the biggest difference to improving attainment for this group of young people and maximise young people's attainment across the senior phase.

Senior leaders should review the programmes of learning from S1 to S3 to ensure that young people access their full entitlements.

Senior leaders have made progress with aspects of this area for improvement. They should continue with their plans to review the curriculum and make appropriate changes.

Senior leaders, in consultation with parents and young people, reviewed the curricular provision from S1 to S3. They made amendments to the structure of the curriculum for session 2025/26. This now allows young people in S1 to access content from all curricular areas across S1 to S3. However, young people are not able to access their full entitlement in line with the Scottish Government's 1+2 languages policy. Senior leaders should ensure they address this. Senior leaders should continue to monitor the impact of changes, particularly with regard to the time allocated and subsequent progression in learning and attainment. They should ensure this provides clear progression routes into and through the senior phase. They

should also ensure that content delivered across S1 builds progressively on young people's learning and attainment from primary school. Senior leaders are developing stronger whole-school approaches to measure progress across S1-3. These approaches are currently focused on literacy and numeracy and should be extended to include all curricular areas.

Senior leaders recognise the need to embed Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) principles and practice more fully into classroom practice. Senior leaders should identify and share areas of good practice linked to DYW and the Career Education Standard more widely across the school to help young people recognise and develop important skills for learning, life and work.

Senior leaders need to develop a clearer overview of the purposes and effectiveness of existing support provisions. This includes improving attendance at school for identified young people.

Staff have made positive progress in this area for improvement and should continue to enhance universal supports for young people.

Senior leaders reviewed and clarified the purpose and use of support spaces within the school. Pupil support staff have also introduced a clearer pupil profile and shared with staff a document summarising this information. As a result of this, staff are more aware of how these spaces play an integral role in enabling young people to access their education. Pupil support staff also introduced a more detailed tracking and monitoring system to capture attendance, access to mainstream classes and wellbeing for identified young people who access support spaces.

Across the school staff have improved systems for tracking and monitoring attendance of all young people, including those who attend school on a part-time basis. This is leading to a greater understanding of some of the issues faced by young people who do not attend school as regularly as others. Senior leaders report that these new approaches are leading to an overall increased attendance rate across the school from 2023/24 to 2024/25. Staff need to understand better the reasons why young people attend school but either do not attend, or leave, classes. Senior leaders should expedite their plans to put in place more rigorous monitoring systems in order to reduce the number of young people who are regularly in school but not in class.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We recognise that the school needs more time to continue to work on areas for improvement. We will liaise with East Lothian 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 East Lothian 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.

Frances E. Graham
HM Inspector

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