

3 December 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In November 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Kennethmont School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the staff and a representative from the local authority. We heard from the school and local authority 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.

Improve the progress and attainment of all children at all stages.

There has been limited progress towards addressing this area for improvement.

Overall, children are beginning to make improved progress in their learning and attainment in literacy. Their pace of progress in numeracy has been slower. Whilst positive signs of improvement have been seen, staff should ensure that raising attainment remains a key priority across the school.

Most children are making steady progress from prior levels of attainment, including children who require additional support in their learning. Staff now need to accelerate children's progress to increase attainment for a minority of children.

Teachers are beginning to use more consistent approaches to assessing children's learning. They carry out assessments in class and adapt learning according to the feedback they gather from children during a lesson. They have created a calendar to identify when planned assessment activity should take place. They are using planned assessments in literacy to inform their planning. Teachers have begun a similar practice with numeracy assessments. They now need to establish procedures and systems that will allow them to record carefully all the assessment information they gather from planned assessments across both literacy and numeracy. This will allow them to demonstrate more effectively the progress children make over time.

The headteacher meets teachers termly to discuss the progress of each child in their class. They use these discussions to identify individual children that would benefit from support or challenge. Staff should continue to embed the improved, more rigorous tracking and monitoring discussions. They should use these discussions to influence fully their planning and assessments.

Strengthen teachers' understanding and application of approaches to evaluating children's attainment and progress, against national expectations.

There has been limited progress towards addressing this area for improvement.

Teachers have begun to strengthen their understanding of national standards and the expectations of attainment in literacy and numeracy. As a result, their judgements of children's progress based on national standards are becoming more reliable.

All teachers are now planning children's learning using agreed pathways. These link clearly to national standards. This is increasing teacher's awareness of national expectations.

Teachers have benefited from working alongside colleagues from another school and officers from the local authority to share and discuss expectations and standards in children's writing. This has supported them to have a better understanding of standards in writing.

Teachers now need well-planned, regular opportunities to share and discuss national expectations of children's progress across other areas of the curriculum. This should help them have a clear understanding of the progress children are making in their learning. This should help teachers plan learning for children at the right level of difficulty across the curriculum.

There has been a few opportunities for teachers to liaise with colleagues to share and discuss national expectations. However, there remains significant scope for more regular, planned engagements to take place. Teachers should be provided with more opportunities to engage in discussions with colleagues from other schools. This will help to develop further their understanding of how to evaluate children's progress effectively.

Develop more consistent, engaging and challenging learning experiences for all children.

There has been some progress towards this area for improvement.

Overall, staff are at the early stages of developing more consistent, engaging and challenging learning experiences for children. They have made some progress towards meeting this recommendation. However, the pace of learning needs to be brisker.

Teachers have established a consistent approach to sharing the purpose of learning with children. They help children to understand what they need to do to achieve success. Children are beginning to assess their own learning. They should now be given the opportunity to use these evaluations to identify their own strengths and next steps and set their own targets. This should help children take more responsibility for their own learning.

Staff, with support from the local authority, have developed a statement on learning, teaching and assessment. This is beginning to contribute to a shared understanding of highly-effective learning and teaching. For example, teachers have improved their use of questioning to deepen children's thinking. The headteacher now needs to support staff further to ensure any good practice is shared across the school.

Teachers provide children with opportunities to learn individually, in pairs and in groups. They use a wide range of teaching approaches. As a result, children engage enthusiastically in their learning. Teachers have begun to use digital technology more regularly to motivate and engage children and help them to learn.

All teachers have participated in professional learning on play. They are at the early stages of providing opportunities for children to learn through play. As a result, children are beginning to

develop their creative and critical thinking skills. Teachers should now plan opportunities for children to develop and extend their skills through play. The headteacher should support staff to engage with national guidance and provide them with opportunities to visit other settings where good practice has been identified.

Teachers have improved how they plan learning across the curriculum. They are working collaboratively to improve the consistency and quality of children's learning experiences. This is beginning to support staff to have a better understanding of how well children progress in learning across the school. This is supporting them to meet the needs of most children. However, a minority of children require further support and challenge.

The acting headteacher has introduced a calendar which shares some of the activity they have planned to evaluate the quality and consistency of approaches to learning and teaching. These include discussions around planning and attainment and feedback from children and parents. The headteacher, with support from the local authority, must evaluate the work of the school on a more regular and rigorous basis.

What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Aberdeenshire Council regarding the school's capacity to improve and how the local authority will support the school. 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 Aberdeenshire 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.

Jennifer Wadley
HM Inspector