

23 September 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Kinlochleven Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The Highland 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. 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.

Teachers should ensure children's learning is well matched to their needs with appropriate pace and challenge. They need to improve their approaches to planning learning and teaching within the school.

The senior leaders and staff team have made positive progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders have supported teachers very well to ensure planning approaches are consistent. These include a combination of Highland Council planners, Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and school planning formats. Teachers' plans detail more appropriately how the needs of all children in the multi-level classes will be met. Plans are progressive and take into account children's prior learning. They provide opportunities for additional challenge and support as needed and help to ensure most children are now taught at the correct level to meet their needs. This is particularly evident in literacy and numeracy lessons. For example, teachers plan challenging numeracy lessons where children work independently, use technology appropriately and discuss the strategies they use to solve a calculation. Teachers should continue to work together to share practice in this area and learn from each other as they review planning formats.

In the majority of lessons, learning is more active, children are learning at an appropriate pace and are becoming more independent in learning. However, in a few lessons the learning is too directed by the teacher and the pace of learning needs to be brisker. Senior leaders and teachers correctly identify the need to continue to review the pace of learning in all lessons.

Staff should improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching across the school. Teachers should make sure learning activities are at the correct level of difficulty for all children. They should provide children with more opportunities to be independent in learning.

Senior leaders and teachers have made positive improvements in this area of work.

Senior leaders updated the learning and teaching framework which outlines their expectations for effective lessons. Staff now have an agreed overview which is supporting them to develop greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching.

All teachers have engaged in helpful professional learning. This has included sharing the purpose of lessons, developing ways for children to be successful, and planning learning to meet children's varying needs. As a result, there is a more coherent approach to learning and teaching across the school. Senior leaders have correctly identified that ongoing professional learning will further support consistent high-quality learning and teaching. Teachers provide children with clear instructions and explanations of tasks. This is helping children to better understand what they are learning and why. As planned, teachers now need to develop learner conversations and target setting with children. This will support children to understand better their own progress and next steps.

In almost all lessons, teachers provide tasks and activities which are planned well to meet children's needs. Teachers use a variety of learning approaches to engage children effectively in their learning. In all classes, children now have opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. Children benefit from and enjoy the range of activities which support most children to build their social skills. In most lessons, children are developing confidence in working independently. Teachers should continue to provide learning experiences that develop children as independent learners. Children who require additional support in their learning continue to be supported well by skilled pupil support assistants.

Senior leaders carry out regular lesson observations in all classes as part of ongoing quality assurance. They give helpful feedback to teachers to support further improvement. This is providing senior leaders with an overview of the quality of learning and teaching and supporting continuous improvement through professional dialogue. All staff engage in regular professional discussion which is supporting teachers to reflect on and improve learning and teaching. Senior leaders are now at the early stages of introducing peer observations for staff. This has the potential to support staff to share good practice and improve further the quality and consistency of learning and teaching. As part of this improvement focus, staff should now engage in professional discussion about learning and teaching with colleagues in other schools.

At the early stages, staff provide a few opportunities for children to learn through play. Senior leaders should now work with teachers to extend quality play experiences. This should support younger children to consolidate learning and develop creativity, curiosity and independence.

Senior leaders should ensure attainment evidence gathered is robust and reviewed regularly to enable children to make better progress in learning. They need to help teachers improve their approaches to assessment within the school. Teachers need support to evidence clearly children's progress across and within levels.

Senior leaders and staff have made significant improvements in this area of work.

Senior leaders now have rigorous systems in place to ensure attainment evidence is robust. They have implemented a clear assessment calendar to help teachers to gather a range of evidence to show children's progress. The calendar details regular literacy and numeracy assessments to be completed throughout the year for all stages. Senior leaders have a comprehensive assessment policy which explains how staff should use assessment information to plan and evaluate learning and teaching. Staff now use assessment data very well. Teachers use data very well to plan learning at the right level of difficulty for most groups and individuals. Senior leaders and staff also use data effectively to plan interventions to support individual children. They have clear assessment measures to show the short-term positive impact of these interventions. They

highlight children who are working beyond expected levels and provide additional challenge for those children, for example in numeracy.

Senior leaders monitor the use of assessment effectively to ensure it is now much more closely aligned with teachers' planning. This is helping to ensure children are making better progress. It has supported teachers to understand children's gaps in learning and address these effectively. As a result, a minority of children are now back on track for national expectations and a majority of children are making appropriate progress towards their own targets.

Teachers and senior leaders now meet termly to review all children's progress and attainment more robustly. They use a range of evidence to evaluate and support their judgements. Senior leaders record which children need additional support or challenge. Together, staff agree how children's needs will be met through adapted class planning, individual or group support. All staff have a very clear understanding of each individual child's progress and attainment. They identify well children's next steps in learning.

Teachers regularly review children's work and assessment information together. They moderate children's learning through engaging effectively with the national Benchmarks to support their professional judgements and analyse assessment data. Teachers engaged in impactful moderation with their associated schools group (ASG) and the staff team took part in local authority moderation cycle professional development. Senior leaders and teachers agree that this collaborative working is strengthening their confidence in measuring children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders' and teachers' current attainment data is now accurate.

As a next step, senior leaders should provide increased opportunities for teachers to moderate with colleagues from the ASG and beyond. This will help to further strengthen teachers' confidence in their judgements of children's attainment and progress.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully implemented robust tracking systems. These systems support them to ensure attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy is now accurate, recorded and reviewed regularly. All staff are confident in the robust data. This is leading to staff being able to evidence more clearly the positive progress most children make across the school.

Staff should work together to raise the attainment of all children in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should develop a clearer understanding of national standards.

Senior leaders and teachers have made a positive start in this area of development.

Senior leaders developed a well-considered strategy for raising attainment to ensure that there is a sharper focus on improving the outcomes for children. All teachers are aware of the strategy and the need to raise further children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. The staff team work effectively together to increase attainment across the school. This is demonstrated through the strong commitment to professional development undertaken over the year. Senior leaders have prioritised professional learning opportunities for teachers to help strengthen approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy. Teachers have been supported well by local authority officers to develop numeracy teaching. Teachers have engaged in impactful professional learning to develop writing and to support children's needs. Most children are now writing more often and extending their writing, which is helping to improve their progress.

Senior leaders' clear focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy is beginning to improve children's attainment. Staff recognise there is more work to do to improve attainment further for all children.

Senior leaders have supported staff very well to deepen their understanding of national standards. They developed the school improvement plan to rightly include a drive to increase moderation and assessment to ensure children's attainment data is accurate. Staff use national Benchmarks routinely to measure the progress children are making within levels. Teachers are more confident in their judgements of children's attainment and progress within and across levels as a result.

As a next step, senior leaders rightly plan to extend the new approaches to teaching writing across the school and build on the teaching of listening and talking skills. Whilst there is clear evidence of children making good progress in learning, there is potential to build on this further. This should enable all children to maximise their 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. The Highland Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Nicola Drew
HM Inspector