

28 April 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In January 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Àrd-sgoil Ceann Loch Liobhann – Kinlochleven High School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement, which we agreed with the school and The Highland Council, February 2026. 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.

At pace, senior leaders and staff should improve the quality and consistency of planning and delivering high-quality learning and teaching. This should result in young people experiencing progressive and creative learning set at the right level of difficulty.

Senior leaders and staff have made positive progress in improving the quality and consistency of planning and delivering learning and teaching. Staff should continue to improve important aspects of learning and teaching.

The headteacher continues to provide effective strategic leadership, establishing clear priorities and increasing collaboration across the staff team. Senior leaders deliver valuable professional learning that is increasing most staff's impact on young people's outcomes. Young people experience better-structured lessons. They are clearer on what they will learn and how they will be successful. Most young people's lessons are based on better planning matched to national standards and expectations. As a result, young people's learning is becoming more progressive and builds more reliably on what they have already learnt. Teachers are improving their skills in ensuring learning is set at the right level of challenge. Senior and middle leaders have enriched the information available to teachers on the best approaches to assist young people who require additional support with their learning. Teachers should ensure that all young people's learning and teaching is consistently high quality. They should set more creative and digital-based activities with young people.

Senior leaders and staff should develop a thorough, shared understanding of assessment and national expectations. Teachers need to have higher expectations of young people's full potential to attain well.

Senior leaders and staff have made positive progress in improving assessment of young people's learning and progress. There are important areas still to improve. Staff should

continue embedding high expectations of young people attaining well and to their full potential.

Most teachers now have a much clearer understanding of how assessment supports learning. Young people benefit from more regular and varied assessment to demonstrate their progress. Teachers work together more routinely to explore national standards. This is helping ensure assessment judgements are more accurate and consistent. While progress is positive, teachers' use of assessment information to plan next steps in learning varies too much. In the best practice, teachers analyse assessment information well to adapt learning for individuals.

Most teachers are using more effective approaches to checking young people's progress. Senior leaders plan to refine whole-school approaches, so teachers address quickly any changes to young people's progress and attainment. For this, teachers need to provide reliable assessment to ensure young people requiring short-term support are identified at an early stage. They should ensure they provide young people with clear and purposeful next steps. These should enable young people to make better progress.

The staff team, working with partners as appropriate, should introduce a wider range of opportunities for young people to achieve and learn new skills. This should assist young people to be more confident, ambitious and aspirational.

Staff, working with partners, have made positive progress in widening opportunities for young people to achieve and develop new skills. However, there remains important aspects for improvement.

Young people continue to benefit from activities and awards that build their leadership, communication and personal skills. These include the John Muir Award, the Youth Philanthropy Initiative, sports, community youth work and National Progression Awards in wellbeing and volunteering. Opportunities in performing arts have increased. A few young people have worked with Fèisean nan Gàidheal to develop singing and bàrdachd - poetry skills in Gaelic as part of Mòd Academy. Most young people contributed to staging a musical production. This was an exceptionally positive event for the wider school community. A majority of teachers contribute to supported study, clubs and wider-achievement activities.

Achievements are now celebrated better. A few young people are influencing school improvement through leadership roles. Only a minority of young people feel their views currently lead to change. Senior leaders now need to strengthen strategic approaches to recognising and checking that all young people benefit fully from the school's offer for achievements. Staff should continue to assist young people understand the skills they are developing and how these contribute to them becoming successful, confident, effective and responsible citizens. Teachers should ensure that the achievement offer features more consistently across young people's learning experiences. Young people should make full use of the local area for their learning.

At pace, the staff team should raise young people's attainment to be at least in line, or above national standards. Senior leaders should support staff by continuing to review thoroughly young people's progress. They should continue to improve the curriculum to meet a full range of learners' needs.

Senior leaders have taken positive steps to raise attainment, with important aspects still to take forward. Young people's attainment in 2024/25 shows a few signs of improvement in specific areas.

Senior leaders analyse attainment effectively at S4-6. They lead improvements to programmes of learning in S4-6 to enable an increasing number of young people to attain the highest possible number of qualifications. A majority of staff need to focus further on improving the quality of young people's passes in National Qualifications. Senior leaders should analyse further progress in S1-3 to raise attainment.

Senior leaders and staff take forward a few positive ways of raising attainment. They should develop a clear, raising attainment strategy that sets out roles, responsibilities and expected impact. Staff need to have clear targets for improving attainment that they and senior leaders check regularly. Going forward, senior leaders should continue to ensure that strategic planning of what young people learn is coherent, raises attainment, and reflects national and local expectations. The local authority should continue supporting the school with necessary resources to take forward young people's learning.

What happens next?

The school has made positive 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 The Highland 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 The Highland Council the details of this inspection and how they will support the school to improve. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Joan C. Esson
HM Inspector

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