

19 May 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Kinlochbervie High 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 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.

Senior leaders need to improve the strategic leadership of the school. This includes in learning, teaching and assessment, wellbeing and inclusion and in raising attainment for all young people.

The headteacher has worked at pace to establish more effective systems that support and improve young people's experiences and outcomes at Kinlochbervie High School. He has led significant progress, strengthened the overall strategic direction of the school and clarified key improvement priorities. He has also reviewed the roles of the wider leadership team and ensured that expectations of all staff are clear. Senior leaders should continue to support and empower staff to lead key areas of the school's improvement work.

Senior and middle leaders have introduced structured approaches to checking the quality of the school's work. Early signs show tracking and monitoring systems are helping teachers identify more quickly young people who need support. The use of updated wellbeing, equality and inclusion policies is helping staff respond more effectively to young people's needs.

Middle leaders are aware of the need to align their faculty plans more closely with the school's improvement plan. This should create a more consistent approach to delivering improvement across the school. Middle leaders should continue to support positive collaboration and self-evaluation among staff and focus on further enhancing young people's learning experiences.

Overall, senior leaders have initiated significant and important work around the strategic leadership of the school. It is too early to see the full impact of this on attainment. Changes are not yet embedded well enough to demonstrate sufficient progress in this area.

Senior leaders and teachers need to identify and implement the features of high-quality learning and teaching. They need to understand fully the role of assessment and monitoring young people's progress. They also need to increase expectations of what all young people can achieve.

Senior leaders and staff have worked well together to improve the consistency of learning and teaching across the school. The headteacher has identified suitable areas for development. Although young people's experiences have improved overall, some important inconsistencies remain.

Relationships in most lessons are positive, but learning is often too passive. Young people do not yet have enough opportunities to lead their own learning. Teachers now need to ensure that learning is appropriately challenging, engaging, well-paced and matched to the needs of all young people.

The overall quality of teaching is improving. Almost all teachers have taken part in relevant professional learning, and a new Learning and Teaching Charter has helped clarify expectations. Teachers should continue to strengthen key aspects of teaching, such as high-quality questioning, and develop more creative use of digital tools.

Teachers have a stronger understanding of the purpose of assessment. In some lessons self- and peer-assessment support learning well. Teachers are beginning to use national Benchmarks and to work with staff in other schools when developing and marking assessments. This is helping improve teachers' professional judgements.

Young people benefit from improved learning conversations and a revised mentoring programme that help them understand their progress. The new Pupil Portal also gives clear feedback linked to the school's tracking system. Staff now need to use this information more consistently to support progress for all learners.

Senior leaders have made progress with aspects of this area of improvement. They should continue as planned to develop further approaches to high-quality learning, teaching and assessment.

All staff need to understand fully the statutory duties relating to inclusion, wellbeing and equality. This will help them to understand better their roles and responsibilities in meeting the needs of all young people. This includes improving their awareness of inclusive practices to ensure that all young people feel valued and included.

Senior leaders and staff have updated policies, including pupil-friendly versions, on attendance, inclusion, anti-bullying and positive relationships. These changes are strengthening a caring and inclusive culture, and more young people say they feel safe and supported in school.

Young people are developing confidence in recognising how they can take positive steps to support their own wellbeing and that of others. Across the school, staff should continue to strengthen young people's understanding of wellbeing.

A few staff have taken part in training on inclusive practice, including how to create more inclusive classroom environments. This good practice should now be shared more widely. All staff should continue strengthening their skills in inclusive approaches.

All young people have a weekly personal and social education lesson covering wellbeing, relationships, online behaviour and careers. Although partners contribute well, the programme is not yet sufficiently engaging or relevant, and many young people are unsure of its purpose. This area of the curriculum requires further development, taking account of young people's views.

Teachers' understanding of the barriers some young people face and how best to support them is improving. Staff have engaged in range of helpful training courses. This work is beginning to lead to improvements for some young people. Senior leaders should continue reviewing the impact of supports given to all young people and ensure that targets for them are clear and measurable.

Senior leaders are beginning work on how protected characteristics are addressed across the curriculum. They are also developing approaches to online safety, respectful relationships and healthy masculinity. Although at an early stage, this work is raising awareness among staff and parents of potential risks and concerning behaviours.

Overall, senior leaders have introduced important changes, but these are not yet embedded fully enough to demonstrate sustained improvement.

Across the school, young people need to have higher aspirations and attain and achieve more in line with their peers in similar schools across Scotland.

Senior leaders have introduced several strategies to improve attainment. These include changes to leadership and staffing in some curricular areas, and a review of literacy and numeracy support in S1 and S2. Staff now place greater focus on preparing young people in the broad general education (BGE) for National Qualifications. These actions are beginning to have a positive impact in a few areas. For example, in 2024/25 an increasing percentage of young people achieved appropriate levels in literacy and numeracy, by the end of S3.

Young people are generally still not achieving as well as similar young people in other schools. Senior and middle leaders are broadening the range of qualifications available, including new Skills for Work courses and National Progression Awards. A few young people are successfully accessing courses outwith the school, for example through the University of the Highlands and Islands or local partners. These options support individual interests and career aspirations well. Staff should continue to keep the courses they offer under review. All young

people meet with a mentor each term to set targets. Staff should continue to refine this process to encourage and support young people into aspirational learning pathways.

Staff continue to recognise and celebrate young people's wider achievements through newsletters, assemblies and positive phone calls. Learners earn "pupil points" for positive attitudes, high quality work and demonstrating school values. Staff should now link this system more closely to skills development. Improved tracking of wider achievement will help identify young people who may benefit from additional opportunities.

Although there have been some promising improvements in attainment and achievement, it remains too early to confirm that this area for improvement has been fully met.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. 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 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with The Highland 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.

Michael Reid
HM Inspector

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