

1 September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In October 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Dalry Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Dumfries and Galloway Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the interim headteacher and staff. We heard from the interim 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the interim headteacher. 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.

The local authority needs to support the acting headteacher to create an improvement plan that reflects accurately the improvement priorities for the nursery and school. The improvement plan must be shared with and understood by all members of the school community. The acting headteacher must ensure the actions needed for nursery and school improvement are clear and are regularly monitored and evaluated to demonstrate progress and identify next steps.

The local authority has taken positive steps to support the school with this area for improvement. Across the nursery class and school, there are early signs of positive progress with aspects of this area for improvement. The headteacher and staff need more time to work with the school community to take this work forward.

The local authority took important steps to strengthen the leadership of the school following the initial inspection. An acting headteacher was appointed in August 2025 in a short-term capacity, before returning to their substantive post in October 2025. An interim headteacher was appointed in October 2025. The local authority is taking steps to appoint a permanent headteacher.

The local authority supported the interim headteacher, staff and children to create appropriate action plans to address the areas for improvement identified during the initial inspection. These plans now focus more clearly on improving outcomes for children with specific actions to be completed and appropriate timescales for improvement. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

Across the school and nursery, staff have worked well together to begin to develop a better understanding of how they will know their improvement work is having a positive impact upon children and families. They now use national guidance documents to help them develop a clearer understanding of how best to evaluate how well the school is performing and identify necessary next steps. As a result, all staff now have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and improvement needs. They now need to work together to build on the emerging strengths to drive forward further improvements.

The interim headteacher correctly recognised the need to ensure children, parents and partners share the school's improvement journey. To do so, she worked very well with children across the school and nursery to create a child friendly school improvement plan (SIP). This approach is helping children contribute better to the life and work of the school. Children now explain with greater clarity how the contributions that they make are beginning to help to make the school better.

Moving forward, the interim headteacher and staff now need to consider how best to embed these new systems and processes to ensure ongoing robust and accurate self-evaluation. They should reflect on how they use this self-evaluation information to help shape a more strategic, longer term school improvement plan which results in sustained change over time. Furthermore, staff should consider how they can work more closely with children and parents to improve further their contribution to improving the school.

With support from the local authority, the acting headteacher needs to take immediate action to ensure all children across the nursery and school access their entitlement to experience learning across all areas of the curriculum.

Staff in the nursery have made positive progress towards this area for improvement. Staff in the primary school have begun to make progress. They need more time to take forward this area for improvement.

In the nursery, the interim headteacher, nursery manager and staff have worked very well together to ensure all children have better access to the full curriculum. Children in the nursery now experience a broader range of learning experiences in line with the expectations of a Curriculum for Excellence. The nursery manager introduced effective long and short-term planning formats which connect better staff's planned learning with children's interests. As a result, children now experience learning across the curriculum which is more relevant and purposeful. Nursery staff now need to consider how they can increase the level of challenge offered to children. A minority of children are not yet engaging in activities that ensure they make meaningful progress in their learning. As a result of the planned experiences children are not yet making appropriate progress over time.

The acting and interim headteachers both recognised quickly the need to change the structure of the school day. As a result of the changes made, teachers now plan longer periods of learning in the afternoon. Children now have more opportunity to engage in periods of sustained, uninterrupted learning. Teachers are beginning to use this time more flexibly to plan more engaging and active learning experiences for children. Staff should continue to reflect on the structure of the school day to ensure children's learning time is maximised.

The interim headteacher, supported by the local authority, worked with teachers to evaluate the quality of experiences being offered to children across short, medium and long timescales. They are at the early stages of using this information to offer children a wider range of learning experiences. As a result of this work, children now receive their entitlement



to two hours of quality physical education each week and learn two modern languages. Teachers are beginning to strengthen their use of local authority progression pathways, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is beginning to help teachers to provide learning for children that builds on what they already know. While this is improving children's access to some areas of the curriculum, teachers planning does not yet reflect an appropriate balance of learning across all curricular areas. Staff now need to ensure they provide all children with learning across the curriculum that is progressive, relevant and engaging.

With support from the local authority, the acting headteacher needs to take immediate action to improve the quality of learning and teaching across the nursery and school.

The interim headteacher has taken positive steps towards this area for improvement. While processes are now in place to ensure staff understand better the quality of learning and teaching across the nursery and school, they need more time to embed new approaches and demonstrate sustained improvement.

The interim headteacher places a strong focus on improving professional learning for all staff. As a result, teachers now engage regularly with professional learning with a focus on improving the quality of children's experiences. Staff speak positively of the impact their professional learning is beginning to have on improving classroom practice.

The interim headteacher now undertakes regular observations of learning. She provides quality feedback to teachers on what is working well and what needs to get better. This is beginning to help teachers identify clearly what is working well in lessons and areas where further improvement is still needed. Staff welcome the increased feedback and recognise the positive impact of these approaches. Staff need to build on this positive start to ensure that all children receive learning that is engaging, purposeful and well-matched to their needs and abilities.

Staff are at the very early stages of developing a learning and teaching policy to ensure a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. This work is not yet leading to consistent improvements in learning and teaching. The headteacher should continue to involve staff, children and parents in developing a shared understanding of what high-quality learning and teaching looks like across the school. She needs to set high expectations to ensure the early signs of progress are built upon and that the pace of improvement is maintained.

In the school, staff have taken positive steps to improve learning environments for children. Teachers and support staff have created learning spaces that are more inclusive and meet better the needs of all children. Staff and children have worked very effectively to improve the nurture space and school library. Children now access calm spaces within classrooms to help regulate their emotions. Teachers and support staff use communication tools increasingly well to support children. All teachers use visual timetables and nurture support cards to help children understand better their day and what is expected of them. The increased and very effective nurture support is helping to ensure that children are better

supported. As a result, there is a notable improvement in children's behaviour across the school, with children learning in calmer and more settled classrooms.

In the nursery, staff engage very positively with professional learning to improve how they support younger children's learning. Staff now use observation and increasingly skilled questioning well to support, extend and challenge children as they play. This is helping most children to stay engaged, understand routines and make better progress in their learning. Staff should continue to strengthen the quality of their observations and consider how they use these effectively to plan intentional and meaningful experiences that extend children's learning. They should ensure these experiences meet consistently the needs of all children.

The local authority needs to take immediate action to support staff to improve approaches to planning for children who require additional support with their learning and wellbeing.

The local authority and staff have taken significant action to address this area for improvement.

The interim headteacher carried out a rigorous audit of the needs of all children across the school and nursery. As a result, she now has a robust, accurate overview of children's additional support needs. Children who require them now have additional support plans in place. The interim headteacher and teachers meet regularly to discuss the progress of all children. As a result, children's plans are reviewed and updated appropriately. Teachers now have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities relating to children's support plans. While plans are now in place it is too early to see the impact on longer term outcomes for children. Staff should now build on this positive start to make effective use of this strengthened understanding of children's needs and plans. This should ensure their work to date leads to positive outcomes for children.

In the nursery, staff are at an earlier stage of developing their approaches to inclusive practice to better support children with additional needs. Staff's improved interactions with children helps them to better manage routines, communicate their needs, and participate more confidently in their play. There remains a need for nursery staff to strengthen the consistency and rigour of planning for children with additional support needs. They should ensure that the voices of children and parents are central to planning and review of support plans.

The acting headteacher, supported by the local authority, needs to support staff to develop a stronger understanding of what children should achieve in literacy and numeracy as they move through the school.

Staff in the nursery have made positive progress. Staff in the school have made limited progress towards this area for improvement.

Staff in the nursery have strengthened their understanding of children's progress across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. Through improved observations, staff capture children's learning better and use this information in weekly planning sessions increasingly

effectively to plan next steps in learning. They now track better children's progress across the early level. This is helping staff to provide richer learning experiences more closely linked to children's needs and interests. Staff should now use this information more systematically to identify significant next steps in children's learning. This should ensure every child's learning builds progressively over time.

Teachers are still at the very early stages of developing their understanding of national expectations in literacy and numeracy. They are beginning to develop their confidence in using experiences and outcomes to inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment. While teachers have engaged in activities within school to better understand standards, there remains a need to support staff to develop a stronger understanding of what children should achieve in literacy and numeracy as they move through the school. As planned, teachers should now work with colleagues beyond the school to help raise their expectations of what children can and should achieve.

The interim headteacher has introduced a clear assessment calendar to ensure clear expectations of teacher's assessment practice across the school year. Teachers are beginning to improve their use of assessments to plan more precisely next steps in children's learning. They meet regularly with the interim headteacher to consider children's attainment and plan next steps. In these meetings the headteacher models well how to analyse information robustly to increase the reliability of assessment data and to better identify gaps in children's learning. Staff now need to embed this practice consistently over time.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Dumfries and Galloway Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school and nursery within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Dumfries and Galloway 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.

Fraser Forsyth
HM Inspector

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