3 November 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Burnfoot Community School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Scottish Borders Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher currently leading the school 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.

Senior leaders and staff need to work together to improve their approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. They should ensure that all children experience consistently well-planned, high-quality and engaging learning that is well matched to the needs of all learners.

Staff have made strong progress in taking forward this area for improvement.

Senior leaders and staff have improved learning, teaching and assessment across the school. They have developed a shared understanding of effective teaching. This is helping to plan and provide greater consistency in children's learning experiences. Most children now benefit from clearer explanations and a wider range of individual, group and whole-class learning experiences. This is supporting staff to provide learning that better matches children's learning needs.

Approaches to learning through play at the early stages have improved significantly. Staff have created stimulating learning environments and now have clear balance between teacher-led and opportunities for children to lead their own learning. As a result, young children are settled, engaged and making good progress.

Staff have improved children's engagement in learning across the school. Children report that they have more of a say in what they are learning and are enthusiastic about the focus fortnights. Staff have strengthened how they identify children's learning needs and address barriers to learning. They use this information well to provide appropriate support and challenge for children. As a result, most children engage positively in learning. To improve further, staff should develop children's skills in becoming more independent in their learning.

Staff have improved how they assess children's progress. They use assessment information more effectively to identify gaps in learning and provide targeted support. As a result, most children are making appropriate progress.

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Senior leaders have introduced a range of targeted supports for children with additional support needs. Early signs suggest that these approaches are having a positive impact for children. Senior leaders now need time to embed these targeted supports fully and evaluate their long-term impact.

Senior leaders should develop more consistent approaches to support a minority of children to manage their behaviour better. They should work with children, parents and partners in order to achieve this.

Staff have made strong progress in taking forward this area for improvement.

The headteacher is providing strong strategic leadership in working with parents and staff in improving relationships and behaviour across the school. Revised approaches to relationships and behaviour are having a positive impact across the school. Most classes are now calm learning environments, where children engage in learning with minimal disruption almost all of the time. Almost all children now behave well most of the time.

Staff have strengthened their understanding of emotional wellbeing, positive relationships and nurturing approaches. Daily check-ins and the provision of safe spaces help children to understand and manage their emotions. Children report that they feel listened to. They are better able to explain how they feel and to identify the supports they need. This is contributing towards almost all children managing better their emotions and behaviour within their classroom.

Staff have improved children's experiences at playtimes. Planned activities and targeted additional needs assistants support help children play together successfully and resolve minor disagreements. Children and parents recognise the positive difference these changes have made.

Senior leaders have improved approaches to preventing and responding to bullying. Most children understand how to seek support when they need it. Most children also believe that adults will listen to them and take appropriate action. Staff should continue to build on this positive work. This should support children's understanding of bullying further and address historical concerns within the school community.

Staff should raise attainment in all areas, prioritising attainment in reading and writing for children. This should include supporting improvements in teacher's professional judgement of children's progress in learning. This will ensure the school's attainment data is accurate and robust.

Staff have strengthened the reliability and validity of attainment information, providing a more accurate picture of attainment and progress. However, not enough progress has been made in raising attainment, particularly in reading and writing. Teachers now have a better understanding of standards and expectations, and they use a wider range of information to identify gaps in children's learning and plan support more effectively.

Senior leaders and staff have introduced a range of improvements to support raising attainment, particularly in reading and writing. Most children benefit from improved approaches to early reading and writing. Children with additional support needs are beginning to make better progress towards their targets.

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While there have been important improvements in the school's approaches to learning, teaching, assessment and support, these have not yet resulted in sufficient improvements in overall attainment, particularly in reading and writing. Senior leaders recognise that more time is needed for recent developments to become fully embedded and to have a measurable impact on attainment. Staff should continue to strengthen how they measure the impact of interventions and track children's progress towards their learning targets. This will help provide a fuller understanding of attainment and progress for all children.

What happens next?

The school has made strong progress in many aspects since the original inspection but it needs more time to demonstrate the impact of these improvements on children's attainment. We will ask for a report on progress in raising attainment within one year of this inspection. This report will inform any decision made by HMIE regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Scottish Borders Council that we intend to take.

Liz Sommerville
HM Inspector

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

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