

17 September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Spean Bridge Primary School and Nursery Class. 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 and practitioners should continue to engage in relevant professional learning to improve approaches to learning and teaching. Staff should improve how they plan for learning to ensure that all children have high quality experiences across the school and nursery.

There have been improvements in this area of work.

Supported well by the new headteacher, the staff team has taken positive steps to improve their approaches to planning learning and teaching. Staff in the school and nursery are more confident in planning children's learning linked to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. As a result, children's learning experiences are now more positive and of a higher quality. In collaboration with senior leadership, teachers should now plan learning for children which is focused on all areas of the curriculum to further broaden learning experiences for all children.

All teachers give children more regular opportunities to make choices and plan their learning experiences. As a result, most children are engaged and motivated in most lessons. Teachers structure lessons more effectively and set high expectations and higher standards in classes. This is leading to children having a greater understanding and confidence about what they are learning and how to be successful in lessons. Children are articulate in talking about their learning. They engage more positively in lessons and are more motivated to learn.

All staff should continue to focus on improving learning and teaching in order to improve outcomes for all children in Spean Bridge. This will include taking more creative and innovative approaches to the delivery of lessons.

Teachers should engage with the National Benchmarks to improve approaches to assessment and gathering robust evidence about children's progress. This will support staff to make more informed professional judgements about children's attainment and plan learning with the right level of challenge.

Overall, positive progress has been made in this addressing this area of improvement.

The headteacher and staff have strengthened approaches to assessment. As a result, assessment approaches are now consistent and more robust across the school. This is supporting teachers to ensure children across the school make better progress towards national standards.

The headteacher has supported staff well to use national benchmarks more effectively to assess children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Teachers now use national benchmarks to demonstrate better the progress of individual children and classes. This improved approach is beginning to strengthen teachers' understanding of children's progress within and achievement of a level. Almost all teachers use a range of assessment evidence well to ensure their judgements of children's attainment is accurate. As a next step, staff now need to widen their assessment approaches across all areas of the curriculum. This will enable staff to gather a detailed profile of the breadth of progress children make across the curriculum.

The headteacher meets with teachers to evaluate the progress individual children are making. They identify children who are on track, working beyond expectations and those who need further support in learning. They use this information effectively to identify which children would benefit from support, for example in reading, spelling, or numeracy skills. Staff plan interventions for individuals and groups of children, including children who require support with learning. Support staff deliver targeted support for identified children which is impacting positively on children's progress in reading and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to ensure planning meets the needs of all children well and supports them to make the best possible progress in learning.

Overall, children make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. A few children at all levels make good progress. Most children at first level are making better progress in literacy. Staff have correctly identified the need to continue to support children's learning in numeracy at first level. The headteacher has evidence to demonstrate gaps in learning being closed for identified learners.

All school staff should develop further their understanding of inclusion to support all children and use appropriate approaches to meet the needs of all learners.

There has been positive progress made in addressing this area for improvement.

The strong leadership of the headteacher is driving forward important changes in the culture, approach and practice in relation to inclusion. There is a clear focus on ensuring that every child has positive learning experiences in Spean Bridge. Staff meet children's needs well through a range of measures. These include reading groups in the middle school and maths and numeracy interventions supported by skilled support staff. Most teachers now plan effectively to meet the needs of children. They work more effectively with support assistants and support for learning teachers to plan appropriately for children who require additional support with their learning. As a result, staff are now able to evidence that all children are now making satisfactory progress in their learning.

Staff review, discuss and analyse closely assessment data on every child. This is supporting all staff to identify children who require support. Children who are receiving additional support attaining and achieving more. Staff now ensure that all children have a stronger sense of

belonging within their class group. They access whole class activities regularly, supported by their class teacher when appropriate. This work should be developed further to ensure that no child feels isolated from their class group. All children should enjoy building relationships and learning with and from others where appropriate. The headteacher should now collaborate with staff, the local authority and external agencies where appropriate to engage further in professional learning to enhance inclusive practice. This will further support staff to develop their inclusive practice and better support children with additional support needs and those who face barriers to their learning.

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.

Teri McIntosh
HM Inspector