

17 June 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In April 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Lybster 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.

Improve approaches, across the school and nursery, to make necessary changes at the right time. Involve children, parents and staff fully in identifying improvements which focus on helping children make the best possible progress.

There has been steady progress in this area for development.

Senior leaders consulted children about the development of the school's vision, values and aims. Children across the school and nursery are now able to talk confidently about them. Children were part of the decision-making process and design of this important aspect of the collective drive for school improvement. All staff should continue embed the vision, values and aims in the work and life of the school.

Senior leaders have developed more robust quality assurance processes across the school and nursery. This includes more rigorous approaches to observations of learning, sampling children's work and learning journals. Senior leaders now have a better overview of classroom practice including the quality of learning and teaching across the school and nursery and a clearer understanding of the progress children are making. Senior leaders now need to use the evidence from all quality assurance activities to further develop and improve approaches to learning, teaching and assessment across the school and nursery.

The headteacher now has a clearer focus on gathering the views of children, parents and staff to support school self-evaluation activity and plan for change. Children and parents still require to be more involved in and consulted in school improvement planning. There is now a more collective approach to leadership across the school and nursery.

All staff now undertake leadership opportunities, working closely with all children. Teachers and practitioners share their learning with each other, working together well to implement and influence change. This work should continue to be further developed to enhance teachers' and practitioners' collective responsibility for school improvement. The development of leadership at all levels should continue to be a focus across the school.

All children are involved in leadership groups to improve the work of the school. This is beginning to develop well their leadership and teamwork skills and support children to lead and influence change. These leadership groups increase children's sense of responsibility and value to the whole school community. A clear next step is for all the leadership groups to

create action plans which have clear timescales identified. Senior leaders should seek children's views on participatory budgeting to further support these groups to make genuine change.

The headteacher should continue to plan, monitor and evaluate more carefully the impact of the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) spend. Any support utilising PEF funds should clearly focus on accelerating the progress of all children impacted by socio economic disadvantage. The headteacher should continue to consult the whole school community about how to allocate PEF to maximise its impact.

Improve learning, teaching and assessment so that all children experience consistently high-quality learning experiences, which are set at the right level for them.

The school has made positive progress in this area for development.

Senior leaders and staff have worked together to develop a learning and teaching policy. This provides all teachers with clarity about their responsibilities in relation to classroom practice. The policy includes information about the support children need from their parents and carers. This policy requires further work to ensure that a consistent structure for all staff working with children is made clear. The further development of this important work should include a full consultation with all staff, children and their parents.

In the majority of lessons, teachers plan experiences for children which are more relevant and matched more closely to their learning needs. They are aware of children in their classes who require additional support to access learning effectively. All teachers should be as creative and innovative as possible in their planning as they continue to strive to make learning as accessible and engaging as possible for all children. They should provide children with learning that is motivating, relevant and uses real life contexts to further support children's learning.

In a majority of lessons, children continue to develop their use of devices to access, share and record their learning. They also use devices to support learning where appropriate and consolidate their understanding of key skills and concepts. All teachers should continue to embed digital technology more fully in their lessons.

Most teachers provide children with regular feedback, both orally and in their jotters. It is important that any feedback supports children to understand where they are in their learning. It should also support children to be clear about what steps they should take to improve. To support this, senior leaders, working with all staff, should now develop further their approaches to the consistent use of feedback.

The headteacher must now work with teachers to develop a consistent approach to planning. This should support children to experience a planned and progressive curriculum, which builds on their learning as they move through the school.

Children should experience appropriate levels of challenge aligned more closely to their learning needs to support them in achieving their full potential. Increasing the pace and challenge of learning for children should accelerate progress and further improve attainment.

Improve children's progress and attainment across the curriculum, with a clear focus on literacy and numeracy.

The headteacher and class teachers have made a positive start in addressing this area for development.

Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved since the original inspection in January 2024. The headteacher and teachers have created a new streamlined assessment overview. This is supporting them to build a more accurate picture of children's attainment over time. Teachers are making better use of a range of assessments to support professional judgements about children's progress. Teachers should continue to develop their skills further in using data to inform their planning. This should help ensure all children are provided with appropriate pace and challenge in their learning.

The headteacher and teachers monitor and track children's progress and attainment in numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing. The headteacher now meets with teachers termly for tracking meetings. They discuss the progress of individual children in literacy and numeracy and identify children who require additional support with their learning. The class teachers and pupil support assistants implement a range of targeted interventions such as literacy and numeracy programmes to help children make progress. Going forwards, staff need to monitor carefully the impact of these supports on raising children's attainment. This will help them to determine how successful targeted approaches have been in accelerating progress for identified children.

Staff track children's participation in clubs and committees within the school and local community. Staff use this information well to ensure equity of opportunity throughout the school and to support children who may be at the risk of missing out. Children's participation in these clubs and committees is supporting them to progress in their learning. They are developing important skills, including teamwork, communication and problem solving. Teachers now need to develop a skills framework. This should support children to understand and talk about the various skills for learning, life and work they are developing through participation in clubs and committees.

Raising attainment across the school in literacy and numeracy should remain as a priority for improvement. As planned, the headteacher and staff, supported by the local authority, should now work together to develop clear strategies to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. This should involve staff engaging with professional learning to support the development of more effective pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy across the school. This should help to ensure that all children are achieving their potential and making the best possible progress.

In the nursery, senior leaders should develop a robust system to track children's progress in learning. This should include an overview of the progress children have made since starting nursery.

Overall, staff in the nursery have made positive progress in improving approaches to tracking children's progress in learning.

There is now a more strategic approach to tracking and monitoring children's progress over time in the nursery. Practitioners make observations about the skills children are developing across the curriculum as they play and learn. They use this data well to update children's individual trackers. They should develop an approach that supports children and parents to have more involvement in contributing to the profiles.

The principal teacher and practitioners now have termly attainment meetings. During these meetings they use the local authority early level trackers to record children's progress in literacy and numeracy. They also use the local authority pre-school development milestone trackers to ensure children are reaching the age-related expected levels. Together, they identify gaps and next steps in children's learning. As a result, staff now have a clearer picture of the progress children have made since starting nursery. Most children in the nursery are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy. Increased challenge in literacy and numeracy should support children to make greater progress in their learning.

In the nursery, practitioners encourage parents and carers to share their child's achievements from out with the nursery. Practitioners use children's individual profiles to record children's wider achievements and how this is supporting them to progress in their learning. As a next step, practitioners should support children to recognise and understand the skills they are developing across their broad range of achievements.

Going forwards, it is important the principal teacher and practitioners continue to evaluate their approaches to monitoring and tracking children's learning and achievement regularly. This will help them to gain a clearer picture of children's progress. The principal teacher and practitioners now need to use the tracking data to inform improvement priorities including improvements to the nursery environment and professional learning for staff.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within one year of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland 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 The Highland Council that we intend to take.

Teri McIntosh
HM Inspector