

20 January 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In November 2023, HM Inspectors of Education published a letter on Kennethmont School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeenshire Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in December 2024. 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 acting 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 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.

Improve the progress and attainment of all children at all stages.

The leadership team and staff have made positive progress with this area of improvement.

Most children across the school have made strong progress in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Most children have achieved expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in reading. The majority of children have achieved expected levels in listening and talking, numeracy and mathematics and writing.

Most children across the school continue to make strong, accelerated progress in reading. Teachers have recently introduced a new set of reading books, which is helping children to apply their phonics knowledge effectively to read unfamiliar words accurately. Children enjoy the refreshed school library where they engage enthusiastically with a wider range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Senior leaders and teachers have accurately identified a minority of children who need further support with spelling across the school. They have introduced targeted learning opportunities to strengthen this aspect of literacy. This has led to a few children making clear improvements in their spelling within their writing. A minority of children have benefited from increased opportunities to present to an audience. Teachers should extend these opportunities further to all children to help them develop essential communication skills for learning, life, and work

Teachers have engaged in useful professional learning to enhance children's experiences in numeracy and maths. This has supported children successfully to use concrete materials to better understand key numeracy concepts. Teachers should support children to develop progressively their mental maths and problem-solving skills. This should help children to apply mathematical knowledge confidently in a range of relevant and real-life contexts.

Most children who require additional support with their learning are making significant progress in their literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. The leadership team meet regularly with teachers to discuss children's progress and identify gaps in children's learning. They plan next

steps and review these regularly. They identify helpful interventions that should support and accelerate children's learning. Teachers now need to ensure that all educational plans contain clear targets that lead to specific, achievable and measurable outcomes for learners.

Teachers are developing their confidence in identifying children who are capable of exceeding national expectations through more effective assessment approaches. Teachers are using this information increasingly well to plan and provide appropriately challenging learning to help children extend and sustain their attainment. They should continue this important work to support all children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Children's attendance is consistently above the national average. The leadership team maintain accurate records and regularly communicate the importance of attendance to families through helpful leaflets, letters and phone calls. These measures support successfully high levels of attendance. This, in turn, is contributing well to improved progress in children's learning.

Strengthen teachers' understanding and application of approaches to evaluating children's attainment and progress, against national expectations.

The leadership team and teachers have made strong progress strengthening teachers' understanding and application of approaches to evaluating children's attainment and progress, against national expectations.

Teachers now assess children's progress in literacy and numeracy regularly, using a wide range of assessment approaches. Teachers have effectively developed their skills in analysing summative assessments. This is helping them to make more reliable professional judgements and identify gaps and next steps in children's learning. This is beginning to support teachers to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all learners.

Teachers have engaged in professional learning focused on the national Benchmarks. They have worked closely with local authority representatives and with colleagues from other schools. This has helped teachers develop a shared understanding of what achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level looks like. Teachers' professional judgements are increasingly reliable as a result of robust moderation processes and improvements to planning and assessment.

Teachers now plan relevant learning experiences for children well, using local authority and school progression pathways across all areas of the curriculum. This has strengthened teachers' understanding of national standards and has supported them effectively to evaluate learning as children progress through a CfE level. As a result, teachers now plan activities that provide different levels of challenge to meet the needs of different groups of learners.

**Develop more consistent, engaging and challenging learning experiences for all children.**

The leadership team and staff have made very effective progress in this area for improvement.

The leadership team and staff have worked together well to create a new learning and teaching statement. This sets a clear expectation of what effective learning and teaching should look like in lessons. All teachers benefit from high-quality professional learning to support whole-school improvement in learning and teaching. The leadership team undertake regularly activity to help evaluate the quality of learning and teaching across the school. This involves visiting classrooms to observe teaching, reviewing children's work and talking to children about their experiences. The leadership team provide useful feedback to teachers individually following these activities to support them to identify what is working well and where further improvement is required. As a result, the quality of learning and teaching has improved. Teachers are delivering lessons which are increasingly challenging and engaging for all children.

Staff teaching younger children have made positive changes to the classroom environment. This supports successfully children's ability to explore and be more creative and curious in their learning. Children apply their learning in different ways and experience greater opportunities to learn successfully through play. Teachers should continue to use national and local authority guidance to support them as they develop further high-quality play experiences for children.

Children across the school, now lead their learning with greater confidence and engage positively with the life and work of the school and local community. They contribute positively to discussions to plan their learning both within and outwith the classroom setting. Children collaborate successfully through a range of leadership groups and contribute meaningfully to leading change and improvement within the school. This helps to provide children with engaging and challenging learning experiences where they apply what they have learned in real-life, relevant contexts. The leadership team and staff now plan to strengthen the voice of younger children to ensure that younger children make an authentic contribution to school improvement. Older children feel increasingly empowered, engaged and that their voice is heard, valued and acted upon.

Staff have built positive partnerships with a broad range of local organisations and partners to provide more purposeful, engaging and challenging learning experiences for all children. For example, staff and partners have organised visits for children to a local bookshop and visited a transport museum. These activities help link successfully curricular learning to the wider world and provide children with a clear and motivating purpose for learning.

The school community value and speak positively about the changes that have taken place over the last year. Parents appreciate the opportunities they now have to come into school and share learning with their children. This includes coming in for the launch of the refreshed library, maths week and working with a local Doric author. These activities are helping

parents understand better how their children are engaging in their learning, progressing and being supported and challenged in lessons.

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. Aberdeenshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Fraser Gillan
HM Inspector

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