

23 April 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on St Peter's RC Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Moray Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting headteacher and 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 should work together to improve leadership across the school. In doing so, staff should support children, parents and partners to participate in evaluation activities that improves how the school works.

The acting headteacher, supported by staff, has made the school values of 'Faith, Hope, Respect, Honesty and Love' more visible around the school. Children are developing their awareness of the school values well. They refer to the school values in classrooms, assemblies and when speaking with staff. Staff should continue to help children understand the school values in their everyday activities.

Senior leaders have made a positive start to checking how well the school helps children learn. However, they need time to consider what aspects of the school's work makes a difference to children and what helps children learn better. Senior leaders have made a positive start to working with teachers to reflect on how they can make sure all learning activities high-quality. Senior leaders should now ensure that teachers make sure that all children are making progress.

Senior leaders and staff still need to develop ways to check that school improvement priorities are helping improve children's outcomes. They need to be clearer on where the work of the school makes a difference to children's attainment. The acting headteacher should explore ways to support parents be involved in the work of the school and how the school plans to use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) meaningfully. This includes ways to check that PEF is making a difference to targeted learners and their attainment.

Staff have reintroduced pupil leadership opportunities successfully. All children participate actively in a leadership group. Children value their contribution to leadership groups very highly. Children share that their leadership group is making a difference to other children and the wider community.

Overall, there has been some progress made in addressing this area for improvement. As planned, senior leaders should continue to develop and embed approaches to improving leadership across the school.

Staff should work together to improve the quality of learning and teaching. This includes ensuring children are actively involved in learning.

Across the school, staff and children have caring and respectful relationships. These relationships support children to be ready to learn and help most children to engage well in learning.

Teacher's professional learning is beginning to help them to think about how they can improve learning across the school. Senior leaders should continue to support teachers to engage in learning opportunities to develop their teaching skills further.

All teachers share with children what they are going to learn. Children now have more opportunities to work in groups and individually. Across the curriculum there needs to be more learning activities which encourage children to think for themselves and lead learning.

Children are encouraged more to talk about their learning. A few children share that they know what they need to do next to make progress in learning. Staff now need to develop ways to help all children to understand what they need to do to continue to progress in learning.

Children are beginning to have opportunities to learn skills in digital technology and use online search tools to support their research. Teachers and senior leaders should continue to ensure all children have regular opportunities to use technology creatively across the school.

Children are beginning to participate more fully in classroom activities. For example, in a few classes, children become 'mini teachers' and explain to the class how they arrived at their answers. All teachers should continue to extend these opportunities for children to talk through their thinking and what they would like to learn about. Children are developing a range of writing skills well across the school. Children in the upper primary use helpful checklists to check their work to see how well they are writing. They receive useful teacher feedback which helps them improve their writing further.

Teachers using play to extend learning for younger children is at the very early stages of development. It will be important for teachers to use national guidance to support their knowledge, understanding and development of play.

Staff have made a positive start to developing activities for groups of children to learn outdoors. Staff should continue with plans to provide more opportunities for all children to learn outdoors. In doing so they will increase opportunities for children to develop a wider range of skills.

Overall, there has been some progress made in addressing this area for improvement. The acting headteacher and teachers have made a positive start to improving learning and teaching. However, it will take time to embed the new learning and teaching approaches to ensure all children experience consistent high-quality learning and teaching.

Staff should improve approaches to planning of learning, teaching and assessment. There is a need to ensure children’s knowledge and skills build on what they know as they move through the school.

Teachers have prioritised improving how they plan children’s learning in reading, writing and numeracy and mathematics. Their approaches to planning are beginning to impact positively on children’s learning experiences in literacy and numeracy across the school. Senior leaders and teachers now need to ensure children build on their knowledge and skills across the breadth of the curriculum.

Staff now have a clearer understanding of how to plan for children’s learning which builds on their knowledge and skills as they progress through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels. Assessment is not yet integral to teacher’s planning. Staff should now review assessment approaches to ensure their monitoring and tracking reflects fully children’s skills and knowledge. The acting headteacher and teachers should now develop an effective calendar to help ensure assessment informs planning more closely.

Overall, there has been some progress made in addressing this area for improvement. As planned, staff should continue to develop approaches to how they evidence the progress children make in learning.

All staff should be involved in planning learning that supports better children with additional support needs. They should ensure that they set targets that help children make progress in their learning.

Teachers have begun to provide children with more frequent opportunities to explore their wellbeing needs. Teachers identify accurately any children who demonstrate obstacles to their learning. More time is now required for senior leaders to check that interventions are helping improve children’s wellbeing.

The school’s approaches to child protection, and safeguarding continues to require improvement in line with national guidance.

Teachers have improved their approaches to identifying children who would benefit from support with their learning in school. Teachers should now develop individual programmes further to support learners to accelerate their progress.

Senior leaders are beginning to take positive steps to encourage good patterns of attendance, in line with national guidance. However, a few children continue to have significantly low levels of attendance. Senior leaders should monitor the attendance of these children more frequently. They should work with them and their families to learn what supports and strategies will help them improve their attendance.

Overall, there has been some progress made by staff to plan learning and set targets that support children with additional support needs to improve. There is a need for staff to ensure that they continue to improve this area.

All staff should work together to have a clear focus on raising attainment of all children.

The acting headteacher is tracking the progress of children increasingly well. The acting headteacher is working with teachers to help them understand the information better and how this information helps them improve attainment. They should now use the information to plan what else children need to learn to improve their attainment.

Staff need to develop further their approaches to identifying children adversely affected by poverty. There is not yet enough evidence for staff to understand if the support they provide is helping these children accelerate their progress in learning. The acting headteacher needs to develop approaches to check that children who receive support for their learning are improving their attainment.

The acting headteacher and teachers have begun to track children's participation in clubs and activities, both in and out of school. They are now using this information to check whether all children have opportunities to access a range of clubs and activities that builds their skills and successes further.

Overall, there has been some progress made in addressing this area for improvement. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work on raising attainment at this stage. The acting headteacher and staff need to develop an overall strategy for raising attainment. This should include how they monitor and measure the progress children are making across the school.

What happens next?

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

David McKellar
HM Inspector