

28 March 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2020, HM Inspectors published a letter on Burnbrae Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Midlothian Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in February 2022. 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 strategic leadership of quality improvement across the school. Ensure systems for tracking and monitoring children's progress lead to a shared understanding of standards and ultimately raised attainment.

The headteacher has had a relentless focus on improvement. Supported well by the depute headteachers and principal teachers, she is developing a culture of learning across the whole school. Together, senior leaders now provide much clearer strategic leadership and direction to support school improvement. In doing so, the senior leadership team have established clear expectations for all staff. They now need to work with staff to ensure all teachers carry out their responsibilities in line with expected national standards. Staff across the school are taking opportunities to lead and contribute to school improvement. For example, teachers and practitioners are leading developments in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, digital technologies and learning through play at P1. It is now important for all staff to work together, taking a more active role in delivering school improvement priorities. This will help to achieve long term, sustainable change and improved outcomes for children. The headteacher and senior leaders should continue to work closely with the whole school community to secure continuous improvement. In doing so, senior leaders will communicate effectively the work of the school, engaging all stakeholders in a variety of ways. They will ensure successes are celebrated more widely.

Across both the social and complex needs (SCN) provision and the complex needs (CN) provision, staff work well together to meet the needs of most children. Effective leadership supports staff to provide appropriate learning activities, that are largely based around developing children's skills for life. Teachers monitor closely and review regularly each child's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff use national guidance appropriately to track and measure the progress of individual children.

Staff in the nursery continue to make considerable progress since the original inspection. Across the nursery, almost all children are engaged and interested in learning. They enjoy positive and respectful relationships with other children and adults. Overall, practitioners use skilful questioning to enrich and extend children's learning. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the whole nursery setting. Practitioners are reflective and regularly share practice with each other to help drive forward important improvements. They benefit from the

well measured support and guidance they receive from the principal teacher and senior leaders. Staff continue to develop their approaches to self-evaluation. They make good use of local and national guidance to help inform and shape improvements. There is scope for the team to develop further ways in which practitioners share practice with each other to secure greater consistency in high quality learning across the setting.

The headteacher is working with local authority representatives to develop and pilot a system to track and monitor children's progress in learning. Senior leaders meet with teachers three times a year to discuss the information they have gathered on children's progress. This helps them identify children who may require additional support or challenge in their learning. All teachers have regular opportunities to plan together with stage partners to improve the consistency of children's learning experiences. This is helping the majority of teachers to develop a shared understanding of expected national standards. As a result of these improvements, these teachers are in a better position to recognise and address gaps in children's learning. This supports children in their classes to make better progress. Now all teachers need to develop their practice together, to support all children to make better progress and raise attainment across the curriculum. It will be important for senior leaders to monitor children's progress closely to ensure that new approaches to planning and assessment have a positive impact on children's attainment.

Improve consistency in the quality of learning and teaching. Develop a framework for assessment and use assessment information to inform planning for learning to ensure children's progress.

In most classes across the nursery and school, children experience positive relationships with staff and peers. Staff should continue to embed nurturing approaches across all areas of the school. Senior leaders and staff have developed a relationships policy that outlines their expectations for children across the school. Staff should support children to understand how key elements of this policy link to the school values, children's rights and learning about diversity. This will help to develop further an inclusive and respectful environment within all classes and across the whole school community.

Teachers have taken positive steps to develop the Burnbrae learning, teaching and assessment policy. This sets out clear, shared expectations about the key features of quality learning and teaching. Most teachers welcome the clarity and direction that this policy provides. There are early indications that new approaches by teachers are leading to improvements in children's enjoyment and engagement in lessons. Most teachers plan collaboratively across levels to improve the consistency and quality of children's learning experiences. This is beginning to support staff to have a better understanding of how well children progress in learning across the school. Senior leaders need to ensure that all teachers maximise these opportunities to plan together, with a focus on improving further the experiences and outcomes of all children.

In most classes, teachers use digital technology well to support and enhance children's learning. Most children enjoy opportunities to learn in shared spaces indoors and outdoors and welcome opportunities to work collaboratively on group tasks and projects. Staff working with P2 upwards could develop further their use of shared indoor spaces to maximise children's learning experiences. In most lessons, teachers provide children with regular feedback on their learning. In a few lessons, teachers' feedback identifies what children have

done well and provides clear next steps for individual learners. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need for staff to continue to improve the quality and consistency of feedback. This should help all learners understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

Senior leaders have worked well to ensure that a whole-school assessment strategy is now in place. Staff gather assessment information which helps to identify children who may require additional support or challenge in their learning. However, this does not always provide learning at an appropriate level for all children. In the majority of lessons, learning is targeted to different groups of learners. Teachers need to continue to develop their use of assessment information to plan learning experiences which provide an appropriate level of challenge for all children and support them to make the best possible progress.

Children in the SCN and CN provisions learn in an appropriate range of environments, both inside and out, including visits to local amenities to enrich their experiences. Children are encouraged to recognise their 'zones of regulation' and are supported well to make decisions based on their feelings. There is scope for staff to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills in real life contexts. Staff teach core skills of reading, writing and listening through an approach that involves many transitions for children in a short period of time. Staff should now review the impact of this approach to ensure that these many changes do not have an unintended impact children's learning.

Practitioners in the nursery have improved how they plan and assess children's learning. Planning approaches take good account of children's needs and particular interests. Practitioners make good use of digital tools to record children's achievements. In addition, they have maintained paper-based profiles as they recognise that many children prefer this method to revisit prior learning. Children's learning journals demonstrate a helpful picture of their progress across the curriculum. The team identify individual learning priorities for children in their pre-school year. They should now extend this practice to include the younger children.

Over the last session, staff at P1 have collaborated well with colleagues from the nursery to improve interactions, experiences and spaces in the P1 classes. Helpfully, members of the nursery staff team work closely with P1 classes to provide ongoing support for children and reciprocal learning opportunities. Staff at P1 appreciate and benefit greatly from their nursery colleagues' expertise. Together, they have created physical spaces both indoors and outside which enable children to learn in rich and exciting play contexts. As a result, all children are fully engaged in learning through play. Staff have established an effective balance between child-led and adult-led learning experiences. This is enabling children to make good progress in their learning. Staff are developing effective approaches to assess and gather key information about children's progress. As planned, staff now need to work with colleagues at P2 and beyond to ensure children build on their very positive experiences at the early level.

What happens next?

The school has made progress since the original inspection, especially to practice in the provision classes, across early years and in P1. We will ask for a report from the local authority on progress within one year of this inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. 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 Midlothian Council that we intend to take.

Susie Smith
HM Inspector