

7 March 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2020, HM Inspectors published a letter on Lawfield 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 January 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.

Raise children's attainment across the nursery and primary school.

Within the nursery, children demonstrate a strong sense of wellbeing and are making appropriate progress. They are enthusiastic learners who are nurtured well by practitioners who know and understand their learning needs. Children continue to build on their early communication and language skills through their play. Practitioners have improved how they include early mathematics and numeracy in children's play.

Teachers at the early level in school have introduced daily play sessions and children socialise well with each other whilst playing. However, senior leaders and teachers must now take immediate action to improve the quality of activities on offer to help children make better progress with their learning.

Overall, the quality of children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics in the school has improved since the original inspection in December 2019. This is particularly evident at second level. However, there is a need to improve the overall quality of learning and teaching and address very high levels of absence to help raise attainment further.

Senior leaders have improved how they gather and use data to understand better the progress children are making. Teachers' professional judgements are becoming more reliable as a result of their professional learning. Senior leaders must now continue to ensure that data about children's progress in learning is accurate.

Ensure children benefit from consistently high quality learning and teaching, which includes increasing opportunities for children to lead their own learning.

Senior leaders and practitioners have created a nurturing, stimulating learning environment in the nursery which enables children to engage much more deeply in their play. Play spaces promote independent learning in early language and mathematics. Practitioners continue to take part in relevant professional learning which is having a direct, positive impact on securing children's wellbeing and progress. Staff in the school should now ensure that all

classrooms and shared learning spaces are attractive and motivating and support independent learning.

Teachers have taken part in professional learning about learning and teaching and have developed their agreed approach, known as the 'Lawfield Way.' It sets out shared expectations about what effective practice looks like. Teachers must now apply their agreed approach more consistently in all classes. They also need to make better use of all the teaching time that is available within the school day.

Senior leaders and teachers have developed new approaches to planning children's learning. These are helping teachers to support children to make better progress in their learning in literacy and numeracy. Children are starting to make decisions about their learning. Teachers now need to consistently give children regular opportunities to influence what and how they learn across the curriculum. They must also ensure that all children at all stages have their entitlement to a full curriculum, including two hours of physical education every week.

There are positive relationships between adults and children in almost all classes. Staff use nurturing approaches to support children's wellbeing and to promote positive behaviour. They work effectively with a range of partners to help meet children's needs.

The recently introduced 'Open Curriculum' morning is giving children the opportunity to use a range of skills and have choice in their learning. Senior leaders and teachers should continue to build on this approach and help children to understand the skills they can develop and improve through their participation.

Improve assessment approaches across the primary stages. Ensure all teaching staff use information gathered from children's learning and assessment activity more effectively to plan learning experiences which meet the needs of all children.

Teachers and senior leaders have made positive progress over the past year to improve how they measure children's progress across the primary stages. They have developed the 'inclusive learning and teaching policy' and have worked with colleagues in Lawfield Primary and other schools to develop their practice. Teachers now use a new approach to successfully identify children's strengths and plan future learning. As a next step, senior leaders should consider how best to record all of the assessment information that is gathered.

In the majority of classes, teachers provide helpful feedback on children's learning. This is supporting children to begin to understand their progress and identify their next steps. Teachers now need to ensure that all children across the school benefit from regular high quality feedback on their learning.

Children in the school and nursery can identify and share aspects of their learning using recently introduced online learning journals. It will be important to develop this approach and ensure that parents have a full understanding of what their children are learning and how they can support this.

What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Midlothian Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Midlothian 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 that has been made.

M. A. Speirs
HM Inspector