

18 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Lawfield Primary School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Lawfield Primary School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Staff in Lawfield Primary School developed comprehensive online learning provision during school closure periods. They engaged well with all families to ensure they had access to digital technology and provided support when necessary on how to use this. Staff followed up and supported any children who were not able to engage in remote learning. They also provided each child, including nursery children, a learning pack personalised to their needs. School staff were in regular contact with all families to offer them support or to signpost them to relevant agencies and services. During the two school closure periods, staff worked alongside other agencies to support the health and wellbeing of their families. Parents and carers told us that they appreciated the high level of support they received during the school closure periods.

Since the re-opening of the school building, there have been occasions when staff and children have required to isolate. However, children and staff have been able to resume face-to-face learning and teaching whilst dealing with this disruption. The local authority appointed three new teachers, which also helped to deal with the impact of the pandemic. Staff rightly prioritised health and wellbeing activities to support children in their return to school and the nursery. Since the return to the school building, staff have also continued to identify and address gaps in learning. Many children also benefitted from attending the hubs during periods of school closure.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The nursery and school staff have worked well together, led by the senior leadership team, to address the areas for improvement highlighted in the original inspection. Education Scotland and local authority staff have supported improvements in the school and nursery. Discussions with the school community highlighted improvements that had been made since the last inspection such as clearer communication and more positive and stronger relationships.

Senior leaders and staff have made a positive start to raising children's attainment across the nursery and primary school. Interventions that have been put in place are showing early indications of a positive impact on attainment. Working with the local authority, senior leaders have appointed additional staff to the school to help identify and address gaps in children's learning and progress. For example, recovery leads, home school practitioners and additional learning assistants. In the nursery, children are enjoying the activities focused on raising attainment including those taking place at lunchtime. However, there remains significant scope to improve the attainment of literacy and numeracy for all children. Senior leaders and staff should continue to raise the attainment of all children across the school.

In the nursery, practitioners are now more confident in their approaches to planning, tracking and assessment, which has led to an increased understanding of the progress children are making. There is still significant scope to raise attainment in the nursery. Senior leaders should continue to promote greater understanding and progression across the early level. Teachers are also becoming more confident in making sound judgements about children's progress. They have started to make more accurate predictions on attainment levels for individual children. This is beginning to support more purposeful conversations with children about their learning. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop further these approaches to ensure all children make appropriate progress in their learning. Senior leaders and staff work well with partners to support individual children's needs. For example, Play Therapy Base, Active Schools and Home Link Family Support. They should continue to monitor and track robustly the impact of additional support in relation to children's attainment and achievement.

Overall, the learning experiences of children across the school have improved since the original inspection. The school and nursery learning environment promotes a more positive and purposeful ethos, and children enjoy their learning more. Most children engage better with their learning.

In the nursery opportunities for children to become more involved in leading and planning their learning continue to develop and this is evident in the floorbooks. All children have an individual learning journal, which practitioners continue to develop to capture children's learning. Practitioners should continue to make effective use of all observations to assess children's progress and identify learning opportunities based on children's interests. Practitioners should ensure that all children engage in activities that are at an appropriate level and promote challenge. They should also continue to engage children in planning their learning and developing their next steps using the experiences and outcomes to effectively plan high quality learning experiences.

Children in the primary school have regular opportunities to discuss and share ideas and demonstrate a good level of cooperation when working with others. Teachers should monitor the length of time children are given to carry out tasks. On occasion, episodes of learning that are too long, leading to some children disengaging from their learning. Whilst pace and challenge in learning have improved, these are not yet consistent across all stages of the school. Staff should increase pace further using approaches to learning and teaching appropriate to each child. They should also give more responsibility for learning to children. This will support further development of children's independent learning skills.

There are now more opportunities for children to be involved in improving their school. For example, refurbishment of the library and the development of new areas in the playground. Children have responded well to early opportunities to participate and lead whole school initiatives. They are enthusiastic about what they hope to achieve in the future.

Recently, senior leaders and staff have developed a helpful inclusive learning, teaching and assessment policy. They have used time together well to discuss and review what constitutes effective learning and teaching. This has the potential to help build greater consistency across the school and nursery. Senior leaders, with staff, are well placed to continue to develop more consistent high-quality learning experiences across the school and nursery.

Staff in the primary school have made a positive start to improving their expertise in assessing children's progress. With senior leaders, they need to continue to develop a whole-school shared understanding of assessment. They should explore further the range of tools they use to make a judgement about the extent to which children have achieved a Curriculum for Excellence level. Senior leaders and staff should continue to review how assessment is linked to planning, and is an integral part of the planning and learning and teaching process. Staff should continue to focus on what learners need to do in order to improve. This will support greater consistency, which focuses on enhancing children's learning.

Teachers are developing confidence in their professional judgements about children's achievement of a level. Staff are working well with stage partners and other teachers in the learning community to build their capacity. Across the school, further work is required in ensuring that children build on their prior learning, and experience continuity in their learning. Involving children further in planning their learning would increase children's voice across the school. This will also impact positively on their enjoyment of learning and create opportunities for greater breadth and depth in learning.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are prioritising their plans to support recovery. As a result, the school needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will also carry out another visit to the school within one year of the publication of this letter. When we carry out another visit, we will write to you informing you of the progress the school has made.

Dr Noreen Phillips
HM Inspector