

20 December 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2019, HM Inspectors published a letter on Macmerry Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and East Lothian Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in December 2021. 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.

**Develop strategic leadership across the school and nursery class to drive forward improvements at an increased pace of change. In so doing, develop robust approaches to self-evaluation to identify areas for improvement.**

Since the original inspection, good progress has been made in this area. Approaches to strategic leadership have improved and the pace of change has increased. All of this is impacting positively on children's learning and on key aspects of school life as outlined below.

The headteacher, principal teacher and staff continue to extend their approaches to self-evaluation well. Senior leaders and staff have accurately identified strengths and continued areas for improvement within the school. Several members of staff have undertaken leadership responsibilities for aspects of school improvement, such as middle leadership or numeracy. As a result of this outward focus, staff review aspects of the curriculum and children are receiving more progressive opportunities to extend their numeracy skills. Teachers continue to review their practice through self-evaluation and undertake professional learning and development, for example, in approaches to pedagogy and aspects of literacy. As a result of this, there are now improved and consistent approaches to learning and teaching across school. Positively, teamwork is now evident from nursery to P7, with the nursery included much more in whole school life than previously.

Significant improvements are evident in all aspects of the nursery, which have been led by the highly effective senior early years practitioner (SEYP). The SEYP knows the strengths and areas for improvement within the nursery very well. She is very supportive and has a clear vision of how to achieve agreed priorities. As a result, the nursery team work very well together, and everyone's contributions are valued. All practitioners are focused on improving outcomes for children and families. All practitioners in the nursery are involved in planning for improvement.

Children in the primary stages are confident in sharing views with others, including with visitors. Children in P7 are proud of their roles as buddies with P1, which they carry out responsibly and with confidence. Children have been involved in using 'How good is OUR school?' to share their views and reflect on next steps. They are keen to take forward further

aspects of improvement in the school, such as developing the school playground. There is a need for children to be better informed about how their views are taken into account. Senior leaders should continue to develop children's leadership roles. This includes the need to regularly share the results of their pupil groups' actions with others.

Parents welcome opportunities to join their children in learning activities, including, for example, 'stay and share learning' in P2. Strong partnership with parents and community members exists in the nursery. Senior leaders should build on the effective practice in the nursery and continue to develop parent and community partnerships in the school. This includes through continuing to explore means of reviving the Parent Council and developing how parents can be key partners in supporting school improvements.

As identified by the headteacher, there is a need to continue to develop and embed more robust approaches to self-evaluation. This includes continuing to develop further shared ownership with staff for school improvement.

**Improve staff and children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators to ensure that the needs of all children are met. Children should be supported to set meaningful targets and discuss their wellbeing with confidence in order to ensure that they all feel respected, responsible and included.**

Good progress has been made in this area. Senior leaders and staff continue to have a strong focus on inclusion and wellbeing of all learners. Senior leaders and staff have continued to develop their whole school approach to nurture, resilience and supporting children's emotional wellbeing. There are much more positive relationships and a calm ethos is evident across the whole school. As a result, almost all children show readiness to learn and demonstrate the school values of 'being ready, respectful, be safe.' Most children report that the school helps them to understand and respect other people.

There is a very inclusive ethos in the nursery and practitioners work well together to support the individual needs of all children. Nurturing approaches are embedded in daily interactions. Practitioners' approach to inclusion is now a strength in the setting. Almost all children are developing an understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They know what they need to do to keep themselves safe and healthy. They relate well to the 'colour monster' used in the nursery to help them talk about emotions.

Children in the primary stages now have a greater understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They relate these to aspects of their school life, for example in relation to 'Skipper' and 'HMS Resilience', going through ups and downs in life. Children's resilience has improved. For example, children demonstrate their understanding of strategies to respond to tricky situations. Staff discuss targets with children in aspects of their learning and wellbeing. Staff should continue to discuss targets with children to ensure they are meaningful. Children demonstrate an increased awareness of conflict and most can identify resolutions and solutions. Senior leaders should continue to strengthen approaches to wellbeing in order to ensure that children all feel respected, responsible and included.

Using data, senior leaders have accurately identified gaps in children's learning impacted by the pandemic. Senior leaders have put appropriate strategies and interventions in place to address learning needs. Across the school, teachers and support staff provide skilful,

sensitive and intuitive support to individuals. As identified, senior leaders should continue to develop further their approaches to improving children's attendance rates at school. This should be done in partnership with parents, in order for children to have the best possible opportunities to learn and achieve.

**Across the school, develop and ensure consistency in high quality learning, teaching and assessment.**

Good progress has been made in this area. Teachers and support staff continue to maintain a positive, nurturing ethos across the school.

Teachers give children regular opportunities to make choices and plan learning experiences. As a result, most children are engaged, motivated and happy to talk about aspects of their learning. Staff have developed strategies and approaches to support children coming into class and moving around the building. These strategies and approaches impact positively on children's readiness to learn and most settle quickly to tasks and activities. School staff work closely to develop further their classroom practice and share teaching and learning approaches through the 'Macmerry Way'. Professional partners support aspects of children's learning well. This includes local authority support from nursery to P7 in improving pedagogy and multi-agency support to meet individual children's learning needs. Children benefit from working regularly independently, in pairs and groups. For a few children, staff should ensure that activities are more purposeful and offer them opportunities to progress further with their learning. Overall, staff are providing more consistent, well-structured experiences for children across the school, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Shared approaches and improvements in the pace of learning are supporting more children to make better progress.

Across the school, teachers share the purpose of learning well. As a class, they discuss regularly what children need to do to be successful. Almost all staff provide useful written and verbal feedback for children in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should now support children to use this feedback to set clear individual targets. This will help children take ownership of what they need to do to improve and track their progress. Teachers use a range of assessments appropriately to understand individual children's achievement, including summative and diagnostic assessments. Senior leaders and staff are continuing to develop approaches to assessing children's understanding and progress in other curricular areas. As planned, staff should continue to develop a shared understanding of quality assessment and agree consistent approaches.

**The school needs to raise children's attainment. Staff need to develop their approaches to moderating assessment and have a better understanding of national standards.**

Since the original inspection, satisfactory progress has been made in this area. In recent years, the school community has experienced challenges as a result of COVID-19, including periods of significant absence for children and staff. This has impacted on the pace of raising attainment across literacy and numeracy.

Teachers' approaches to moderation and assessment have improved considerably. Across Curriculum for Excellence levels, teachers work collegiately when moderating children's progress in learning. They collaborate closely with colleagues from local schools to share and

discuss children's progress in writing. Early level staff across nursery and primary stages meet to discuss planning and progress. As a result of regular moderation, staff have increased confidence and a shared understanding of the standards expected. This has improved the rigour of teachers' professional judgements.

Senior leaders and staff correctly identified children's attainment in writing as a school wide priority. They made changes to teaching approaches across the school to address this and provide tailored support for targeted groups. Across the school, most children's writing shows evidence of positive progress.

Recent tracking information shows an increase in the number of children who are on track to achieve nationally appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Most children requiring additional support are making appropriate progress from their individual prior levels of learning and a few children are achieving nationally expected levels.

As identified earlier, there are significant improvements in all aspects of the nursery. This includes how children's progress is observed, recorded and appropriate supports put in place for individuals. Children are progressing well in all aspects in the nursery.

Senior leaders and staff recognise that improving children's attainment in literacy and numeracy remains an area of high priority in the school. There are clear plans and well-considered actions in place to support this. This includes embedding the approaches to self-evaluation, consistency in high quality learning experiences, attendance at school and wellbeing for all.

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

Sally Stewart  
Managing Inspector