

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 Meethill Primary School and Nursery Class, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently held discussions with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to the 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 the original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit:

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Throughout this challenging period, the staff at Meethill Primary School and Nursery Class have been proactive in their efforts to support the school community. They have engaged with children and families online, in hubs and via phone calls and doorstep visits. This has helped to maintain communication and strengthen relationships. During the periods of remote learning, staff developed their own technology skills to enable them to use online platforms effectively. They continue to work together to identify the learning and wellbeing needs of children and provide support for the school community. The staff support and encourage each other throughout this process, building capacity within the staff team.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The staff at Meethill Primary School and Nursery Class were asked to work as a team to ensure all children experience high quality learning and teaching. They are beginning to make progress in addressing this area for improvement but the quality of children's experiences is not yet consistent across all stages.

Class teachers are now collaborating more frequently on planning and assessing learning and teaching. This is helping to establish agreed expectations of standards. They are now using a wider range of questioning and assessment strategies to promote and evaluate learning. To further improve the quality of learning and teaching, staff should consistently provide children with appropriate levels of support and challenge. The leadership team needs to ensure that there is an effective and consistent approach to planning learning across the school. This will support children's progression within subject areas and across the curriculum.

The staff increasingly evaluate their own work and are developing a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching. They take part in professional learning, led by colleagues and the local authority, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on their practice. They

should now monitor and evaluate how their own professional development contributes to improvements in children's learning experiences.

Children in the early primary stages now spend more time learning through play, and technology is being used more frequently across the school to engage and motivate learners. The staff should build on this positive start and continue to develop and refine these approaches. This will involve ensuring consistency and providing the correct level of support and challenge for all children.

During the original inspection, it was highlighted that children should be given increased opportunities to lead and evaluate their own learning. Staff are at the early stages of taking this recommendation forward. Children understand the purpose of their learning but are not yet fully involved in assessing their own progress. Staff are now beginning to incorporate an element of choice into tasks. As a next step, it will be important to ensure that the choices provided are meaningful and appropriately matched to children's learning needs.

The staff at Meethill Primary School and Nursery Class were asked to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy. It was recommended that they establish a clear strategy to raise attainment and achievement for all children which increases expectations of standards and progression in learning. The school is at an early stage in addressing this area for improvement. Staff are developing their use of assessment approaches and as a result, attainment data is now becoming more accurate. The leadership team have introduced a new system of tracking children's progress which is helping to inform staff discussions about attainment. However, the school does not yet have an established and consistent approach to improving attainment and achievement. Attainment still remains too variable.

What happens next?

Meethill Primary School and Nursery Class needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We recognise that all schools have faced significant challenges as a result of COVID-19. Staff at Meethill have supported the school community throughout this difficult period. The leadership team and staff should now work collaboratively to improve children's learning experiences and attainment. We will carry out another visit to the school within one year of the publication of this letter. Following that visit, we will write to you informing you of the progress the school has made.

M. A. Speirs
HM Inspector