

21 December 2021

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 Kinlochbervie 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 virtual meeting in Kinlochbervie Primary School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families are being supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that are 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.

Kinlochbervie Primary School is a member of the North West Sutherland Schools Group. Since our last visit, this school's group has grown to include two additional early years provisions, including one located in Kinlochbervie. Senior leadership time has been increased to reflect this change. The appointment of new permanent staff to Kinlochbervie Primary School has brought stability to the staff team. This is supporting the school to drive forward improvement more effectively.

Partnership working across the North West Sutherland Schools Group has strengthened further over the past two years. The partner schools plan and operate together as one age 3-18 provision. Approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance have strengthened, resulting in a more accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff have increased opportunities to lead aspects of school improvement. Children are encouraged to contribute their views and develop their leadership skills in a variety of ways.

The whole school community work closely together to implement the safe return to in-school learning. Children are developing their resilience skills to enable them to cope with different challenges. Outdoor learning remains a strong feature of the work of the school. Learning experiences are being enhanced further through the introduction of additional features, such as the installation of a poly-tunnel.

The popular 'come together Thursdays' held at Kinlochbervie Primary School were reinstated at the request of parents following periods of remote learning. Staff and learners from three small rural primary schools learn together on a weekly basis. Children's experiences as they transition to secondary school are improving significantly as a result. The introduction of an additional weekly learning session for all children in P7 is strengthening this further. These learning session days provide regular opportunities for staff to shadow and learn from each other. A shared approach to promoting positive behaviour has been developed in partnership with children and parents. The resulting expectations enhance the effectiveness of these weekly come together days.

The effective use of technology enabled staff to maintain joint approaches to planning and assessment across the North West Sutherland's School's Group during the pandemic. An increased use of curriculum frameworks is supporting staff to ensure more appropriate progression in learning across a range of curriculum areas. Staff's understanding of national expectations has increased, with assessment now forming an integral part of planning. A robust tracking system is now in place. This enables staff to chart progress, identify gaps in learning, and monitor more effectively the impact of support provided.

Staff, children and parents increased their digital skills during periods of remote learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All children benefit from access to a digital device. Attendance at parents' meetings has been made easier through the use of technology. The introduction of online learning journals led parents to become more involved in, and have a clearer understanding of, their child's learning. Children demonstrate a greater understanding of the purpose of their learning and what they can do to improve.

Staff identify that a sustained focus on improving learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy supports children to make improved progress in their learning. Professional learning and the introduction of new reading materials are contributing to raising attainment in literacy. Children are observed to be more engaged in their learning and are more able to apply their numeracy skills in different situations.

What happens next?

The school has been responding well to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. The Highland Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Pamela Adamson
HM Inspector