

2 July 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Luthermuir School
Aberdeenshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including outdoor learning and tracking and monitoring children's achievements. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children learn in a purposeful and highly supportive environment. Most children cooperate very well with staff and contribute appropriately to lessons. They work well together to complete tasks. Most children remain focused and achieve success working independently but they sometimes revisit a skill they have already mastered instead of trying more challenging work. Children are not sufficiently clear about targets for their learning. They should be given more responsibility for planning and leading their own learning. Children have responded very positively to increased opportunities for leadership and to contribute to the life of the school. Children in P6 and P7 act responsibly in their roles as buddies, lunchtime monitors, Junior Road Safety Officers and playground leaders. Children develop new skills and increase their talents through golden time activities and school improvement groups. The school now needs to ensure these developments are sustained and that children are challenged by these activities.

Most children use their literacy and numeracy skills well across learning. Most children are achieving well in reading, writing and spelling and a few are achieving very well. Staff effectively track children's progress in reading and spelling. They are at the early stages of developing this for writing, mathematics and other curriculum areas. Children make effective use of the school library and information and communication technology for research. Most write well for a range of purposes. However, children in the P5-7 class are not yet sufficiently aware of how to improve their writing. In the middle and upper stages a significant number of children are not sufficiently confident in mathematics. Staff have recently begun to improve assessment to ensure they identify and resolve gaps in children's understanding. Children have a good knowledge and understanding of different cities, cultures and traditions around the world. They can talk at length about science and nature. With effective support from

visiting specialists, children are developing well a range of skills in physical education and drama.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. Children are starting to make links across their learning and to apply skills in new contexts. A number of committed community partners support children's learning and development. The school has recently established a healthy breakfast tuck shop through which children increase their understanding of health and wellbeing and enterprise. Children's physical health and wellbeing is further enhanced through the wide-ranging Active Schools programme. Children are well supported during the move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1. Increasingly, the curriculum provides a rich variety of learning experiences through which children can develop skills for learning, work and life. We have asked teachers to take more account of children's prior learning and achievements when planning lessons. Staff plan a wide range of tasks and activities which motivate children. However, the work given to children is not always challenging enough. Additional support for children who experience specific barriers to learning is well coordinated and very effective across the school. A significant number of children benefit from this and make good progress in their learning.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher and staff demonstrate high levels of commitment to the children in their care. Following a difficult period of change for the school community, they have worked well together to maintain a positive ethos and constructive climate for learning. Staff value opportunities for professional learning. They are reflective and proactively seek to improve their work for the benefit of the children. The headteacher encourages all staff, children, parents and community partners to contribute their views on how the school can improve its work. Under his leadership, the school has moved forward with Curriculum for Excellence and in most lessons learning and teaching is active and engaging for children. The school is gaining a renewed sense of direction which now needs to be sustained and built on. Future improvement planning should include strengthening the shared vision and aims for the school, raising attainment, increasing children's achievements and further improvements to the curriculum. The school would benefit from further support to enable it to achieve this.

This inspection of your school found the following key strengths.

- The constructive and caring ethos which pervades the school.
- Polite, friendly children who are keen to learn.
- An increasingly wide range of learning experiences.
- The headteacher and staff's commitment to professional learning and ongoing school improvement.
- Approaches to supporting children with additional support needs.

We discussed with staff and Aberdeenshire Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Involve the whole school community in a review of the school's vision, value and aims linked to a school improvement plan focused on outcomes for children.
- Implement planned improvements in assessment, tracking and monitoring and use this to increase children's achievements across the curriculum.
- Further develop the curriculum to ensure well-planned progression taking account of prior learning and achievement.
- Improve approaches to self-evaluation to secure consistently high quality learning and teaching across the school.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

Whilst we are satisfied with the overall quality of provision we are not confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading sufficiently to improvements. With support from Aberdeenshire Council and Education Scotland the school will be able to make the necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer along with Aberdeenshire Council will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Patricia Watson
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/LuthermuirSchoolAberdeenshire.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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