



Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to update you on progress that the school is making regarding the issues identified by Ofsted.

As you will already know, the school received a full inspection in April 2016 and was given the grade of Requires Improvement. In addition to the aspects identified as requiring improvement, many positive issues were also identified during the inspection and it was recognised that the school has many strengths, including the positive attitudes of the children, showing that they are enthusiastic about their learning and happy to come to school.

This letter will seek to give you a summary of the work that has been ongoing since September 2016, when I took up post as Executive Headteacher and Mrs Appleton took up post as Assistant Headteacher.

School Development Plan:

During the early part of the Autumn Term 2016, the School Development Plan was completely re-written and now includes all aspects required to answer issues raised by inspectors.

External Support:

External specialist support has been commissioned through the North Star Teaching School Alliance. This means that specific support can be targeted to where it is needed. For example, there is a planned programme of support to develop subject leadership and the quality of planning with a specific focus on writing. In October I reallocated subject leadership responsibilities and a generic job description has been written and distributed. Subject leaders have written an action plan for their specific subjects and received support to ensure the actions are specific. In addition, we are receiving some specific training for teachers in the teaching of writing. This training is taking place over 3 separate twilight training sessions. The School Improvement Adviser is providing some training to the newly formed governing body.

Curriculum:

Teachers have worked together, using their expertise, to create a long term plan for the current curriculum. As part of the plan there is a focus on writing opportunities and diversity/ British values. The curriculum plan includes overarching themes creating a whole school focus for learning. These plans are now almost ready to be published on the school website.

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Marking and Feedback:

Even though a new marking and Feedback policy was adopted in July 2016, it has been reviewed again and another policy adopted from January onwards. In the new policy, we have an emphasis on ensuring that marking is meaningful, manageable, and motivating and that it moves children's learning forwards. When you look in your children's writing and maths books, along with other subject specific learning you will find some pieces of work that are marked in more detail than others. This is in line with our policy. We have used recent research to help us develop our new policy, including an Education Endowment Foundation paper 'A marked improvement?' and 'Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking', a report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group.

It would be worth spending a few minutes with your child/children when you visit the school for your parents' evening appointment to ask them about the teachers' feedback and marking and what they have needed to do as a result.

Writing:

As you will already be aware, in the autumn term, we held a writing information evening for all parents and governors to attend. This highlighted what we are doing as a school towards writing and also how you could help as a parent or governor of the school. This evening also gave parents and governors a chance to talk about phonics and how to understand and support their child in reading and writing at home.

To give writing a high profile in school, we have held a writing competition where pupils' writing content was judged by our Chair and Vice Chair of Governors. Children were awarded first, second and third prizes and all writing is being celebrated through displays in school. Parents will be able to read this work when they come in for parent consultation meetings in February.

Through developing our long term plan, this has allowed writing be approached in a thematic and cross curricular way, giving children ample time to exercise their writing skills in Literacy and the wider curriculum.

Monitoring:

A monitoring and evaluation calendar has been devised and adopted which provides an overview of all monitoring activities in school. The focus of monitoring activities varies depending on need within school and will include aspects such as scrutiny of children's books / work, pupil interviews (where specific questions are asked of a selection of children), learning environment assessments, observations of learning, governor monitoring and conversations with the link class teacher / subject leader etc.

Assessment:

A new system for tracking pupil's attainment and progress has been devised and adopted. There are 6 assessment points in our assessment calendar, in line with the end of every half term. This shows whether children are working at the expected stage by the end of the year and whether they are progressing at the rate that is anticipated. Following each assessment

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point, pupil progress meetings are held between the teacher, assistant head and executive head to discuss the progress and attainment of children and any additional actions that need to be taken.

Challenge:

Ensuring that children receive the right amount of challenge in their learning is an ongoing priority for us. The various monitoring activities are providing a picture of the amount of challenge for children and the new assessment processes are providing a focus on whether children of all abilities and year groups are sufficiently challenged. We believe that helping children develop resilience when faced with challenging learning is a particularly important life skill.

In your child's books, you should see the result of learning activities that have posed challenge to your child.

Subject leadership:

As mentioned above, subject leaders are receiving training in order for them to fulfil their role. Subject leaders have been placed across the two schools in the federation. For example, Mrs Roberts, Maths leader and Class 3 teacher at Staveley, has visited Kirk in order to carry out some monitoring and has sight of the data for attainment and progress in Maths. She will use the results of the monitoring in order to establish ongoing priorities for the development of maths.

British Values and Diversity:

You will already know about our new school councils. If you haven't already seen the photos of the school councillors, these are in the school hall. Please do have a look when you come to visit your child's teacher on parent's evening. In addition, we have planned in some 'diversity weeks' when a particular focus will be provided within school on the British Values specified by the government; democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. Not all of these values will be focussed upon in every diversity week. We have also placed a particular focus in our long term curricular plan on threading these values through the curriculum. Within school, you will see displays which represent these values.

As you can see, we have been very busy since September and feel that progress in school towards the issues identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement is rapid. Should you have any questions or queries relating to the above information, I am very happy to meet with you and discuss further.

Yours sincerely,
Liz Mellor