

1 February 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 Clepington 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 to Clepington Primary 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 our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Clepington Primary School is an 'A' listed building that sits in the Stobswell/Maryfield area of Dundee. There is a special unit attached to the school. In June 2021, the acting headteacher took up post following the appointment of the headteacher to a leadership role elsewhere. The senior leadership team also includes a deputy headteacher and two principal teachers.

The primary focus for senior leaders and staff throughout the experience of the pandemic has been the wellbeing of all across the school. Parents and children are appreciative of the effort made by all staff to support wellbeing. They believe staff listen to their views and react appropriately. For example, the headteacher, on the return to school buildings, responded to parental concerns by prioritising planned activities for children to socialise with classmates. Since the reopening of the school building, staff have focused on making sure the school environment feels safe and welcoming to children. When children returned to school buildings for the first time, they returned to the same classes with the same teachers wherever possible. This ensured children, many of whom have faced challenge and loss, experienced continuity and stability to support them back into school life.

During the first period of remote learning, the school worked in partnership with other local schools, focusing on delivering health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Staff across all the partner schools worked in the hub which was established in a nearby school. To provide access to learning, the school provided learning packs, digital devices and resources which could be collected in local partner supermarkets. After the first period of remote learning, teachers focused on building their digital skills. Staff have adopted a commercial digital platform, which supports increased communication and engagement with parents.

There has been a high number of COVID-19 related absences for both children and staff since the return to school buildings following the second period of remote learning. As a result, children's learning has been interrupted through illness or periods of self-isolation. Staff expressed concern that these interruptions had a negative impact on children's motivation to learn, especially towards the end of the school session 2020-21. Upon taking

up post in 2021, the acting headteacher conducted a survey with children to ask them what would help them feel more engaged in their learning. As a result, the school increased further the emphasis on learning outdoors, supported by partners including Dundee United Football Club.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The headteacher, acting headteacher, senior leaders and staff have made considerable progress towards addressing the areas for improvement outlined in the original inspection report, despite the many challenges of the pandemic. The headteacher has ensured that both short and long term planning focus on the values at the core of the school community. These include raising attainment through high-quality learning and teaching and leadership. The acting headteacher has continued this successful approach through a shared vision of positive change. This has resulted in children and staff feeling empowered to lead change across the school. Children contribute effectively in a range of ways, for example as members of the curriculum leaders programme, health and wellbeing group and school improvement groups. Children describe confidently their role in bringing about improvement in their school.

The teacher learning communities in particular are a powerful driver of positive and wide-ranging change in the school. Through this approach, all staff have engaged in professional learning which has had a direct impact on improving children's learning. They are involved increasingly in undertaking their own research when driving forward aspects of improvement. One strong example is the collaborative action research project with the Robert Owen Centre at Glasgow University to improve writing. The impact of this research-driven approach to improving learning and teaching is evident in improved attainment in reading and writing. Data also shows that there has been an increase in the number of children engaged in their learning.

Senior leaders are committed to building relationships across the school community with a focus on consistency of approach for all. Wellbeing is placed at the heart of the curriculum. There is an emphasis on creating a calm, listening community with core expectations of everyone to 'be ready, be respectful and be safe'. There are identified places across the school where children can go if they are looking for help with managing their own behaviour. This consistent approach provides much needed reassurance and support to children, their families and staff. Senior leaders credit this approach with a commendable reduction in exclusion numbers and increased engagement in the learning across the upper school.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. 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. Dundee City 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.

Jacqueline Gallagher
HM Inspector