

1 March 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 Riverbrae 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 visit to Riverbrae 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 and young people's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officers 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

Throughout the lockdowns, staff responded positively by offering online learning to all learners. Less than half of children and young people physically attended the school on part-time rotational places. This rotation helped school staff manage physical distancing requirements more effectively. Staff were able to provide targeted support for individual children and young people. They held regular virtual assemblies, which were popular with learners and their families and helped combat social isolation.

Staff understood the importance of supporting children and families during lockdown. They delivered care packages, undertook wellbeing visits and provided specialist resources for learning. They regularly went beyond the parameters of their usual role to help the wellbeing of the school community. For example, they established a walking group to support parents and carers. Senior leaders also made appropriate referrals to a counselling service that supported the wellbeing of children and young people experiencing loss and anxiety.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The headteacher has been successful in creating a positive, caring culture at Riverbrae School. She promotes the vision and values of the school and nursery well. Aply supported by her senior leadership team, the headteacher has installed a greater sense of direction for school improvement. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, new approaches to tracking and monitoring have been adopted well by staff and the curriculum is developing effectively. Children's and young people's progress and attainment are improving. Senior leaders now need to ensure that continuous improvement is embedded further across the school and nursery leading to improved outcomes for all children and young people.

Senior leaders are encouraging staff to take on leadership roles. An increasing number of staff are taking on additional responsibilities well. They are leading and contributing effectively to areas of school improvement including children's rights and health and wellbeing. A minority of children and young people have additional responsibilities in the

school. They participate well in pupil councils and take on leadership roles in classrooms, across the school and occasionally in the local community. Senior leaders and staff should now identify creative ways for more children and young people to take on leadership roles.

Senior leaders in the nursery now have clearly defined remits and leadership responsibilities. Practitioners in the nursery take on leadership roles well such as completing the wellbeing information for 'team around the child' meetings. Staff now need to look at developing imaginative ways for children to take on leadership roles in the nursery.

Teachers and practitioners are planning learning at the broad general education and senior phase more effectively. They are using personalised planning approaches well to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people. Whilst planning learning, teachers and practitioners are taking better account of learners' interests and aspirations. At the senior phase, young people now follow bespoke individualised learning programmes incorporating a mixture of National Qualifications and personal achievement awards. Staff now need to streamline their tracking and monitoring approaches. They should focus on recording information which measures progress well and influences future learning.

Senior leaders and practitioners in the nursery have compiled new and improved processes to assess, track, plan and monitor children's progress more effectively. Each child now has a learning and development overview of their progress which teachers update at regular intervals. Senior leaders and practitioners need to ensure these processes are completed timeously for all children and continue to be reviewed regularly.

During the pandemic, nominated staff across the school and nursery took a lead role in developing the curriculum successfully. The new approaches are ambitious and meet better the needs and interests of learners. These developments took place across a variety of curriculum areas including expressive arts and mathematics. Staff in the nursery have improved successfully the learning environment to encourage children to make choices in their play and freely go between the two playrooms. They now need to improve the quality of the outdoor spaces and develop more outdoor learning activities. Staff in the nursery should also continue to reflect on how the curriculum could be developed to meet better children's needs. This should include an increased focus on health and wellbeing, communication, numeracy and mathematics.

Young people at the senior phase are achieving an increasing number and range of National Qualifications (NQ) and personal achievement awards. This has supported all school leavers in June 2021 to move on successfully into further education, training or a job. Senior leaders have put in place aspirational plans to improve attainment and achievement across the school and nursery. They now need to continue to raise expectations of what learners can achieve and to embed further individualised planning approaches. Teachers and practitioners would benefit greatly from increased scrutiny of their learning and teaching approaches.

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 are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have also been making progress in taking

forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection. We recognise that the school needs some more time to implement fully its priorities for improvement, notably raising children's and young people's attainment and achievement. We have asked Renfrewshire Council to provide us with further information about the school's progress within one year of the publication of the letter. We will work together with local authority officers to agree what will happen next. Should we require another visit to the school, we will inform parents/carers. Otherwise, Renfrewshire 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.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector