

22 June 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Scottish Ministers requested HM Inspectors conduct a special inspection of Spark of Genius Harbour Point School in accordance with [section 66 \(1\) of the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). In May 2021, HM Inspectors visited Spark of Genius Harbour Point School. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers, young people, partners and placing authorities, and worked closely with the school proprietors, headteacher and staff. We looked at the quality of the school's plans to improve its performance and meet young people's needs. We also examined the school's provision in relation to safeguarding, child protection and promoting positive behaviour, and how well young people were achieving.

Quality of the school's plans to improve its performance

The newly-appointed headteacher, supported by the depute headteacher, has made a promising start in improving the culture at the school. They are fostering positive relationships across the school and aiming to improve young people's wellbeing. Most parents and partners are confident the new senior leaders will improve the school over time. Senior leaders now need to increase significantly the pace of improvement at the school with a clear focus on improving outcomes for young people.

Senior leaders have recently introduced monitoring systems to help measure school performance. These systems are not yet identifying key areas requiring improvement such as safeguarding and child protection. Senior leaders need to use a range of evidence to help them identify accurately immediate improvement priorities. This should include valuable information from staff's analysis of young people's progress as well as the views of young people, parents, partners and staff.

The school's arrangements for communicating with parents, partners and placing authorities are not effective. Senior leaders should ensure that young people, parents and partners are included in regular reviews of learners' progress. In doing so, they need to identify creative ways for young people to contribute to reviews and decisions affecting their future.

Teachers and support staff require to take more responsibility to reflect on the quality of their own performance and identify ways to improve their practice. In particular, they should develop creative ways to engage all young people in their learning. Teachers need to use a wider variety of learning and teaching approaches to meet young people's needs and improve their achievements.

Supporting young people

Senior leaders and staff do not yet have a clear understanding of young people's additional support needs. Support provided for young people is often reactive and needs to be planned in a more effective way. Senior leaders are beginning to use a small number of new measures to identify better learners' additional support needs. These measures are not yet informing learning and teaching approaches or improving young people's achievements.

Whilst almost all young people have learning plans with individualised targets, these targets are not helping young people to achieve. Together with young people, parents and partners, staff need to ensure learning targets are specific, relevant and support learners' progress. All plans need to be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure they take account of young people's changing needs and circumstances.

Safeguarding, child protection and promoting positive behaviour

The school's policies and approaches to safeguarding and child protection require urgent action. Senior leaders and staff do not yet have a consistent understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and wellbeing. Senior leaders need to put in place policies and practices in line with national legislation and guidance. These policies and practices must take better account of potential risk factors facing young people at the school. For example, as an immediate priority, the proprietors need to ensure that inappropriate content cannot be accessed via the school's information technology systems or young people's personal devices.

Senior leaders need to take action to reduce the use of safe holds. They also need to ensure that whenever staff use safe holds they do so in an appropriate and consistent way. The school's procedures for reporting and recording restraints requires to be improved. Following any incident involving a restraint, senior leaders must ensure that they conduct a detailed review. This includes reviewing the additional support needs and risk assessment for each individual young person involved. The school needs to record every action taken and ensure that all contacts with other agencies are noted.

Senior leaders recognise the number of young people temporarily excluded from school has been too high. They acknowledge the use of exclusion does not support young people's social, emotional and physical wellbeing, and should be used only as a last resort. In order to minimise the use of exclusions and safe holds in line with national guidance, staff need further support. In particular, they should develop better approaches to help young people manage and improve their behaviour.

Young people's achievements

The majority of young people can work independently, exercise responsibility and contribute effectively to most tasks and activities. They are able to try new things and work as part of a team. A few young people are beginning to build their confidence and resilience. Overall, young people need more support to help them to achieve. This includes planning, promoting and celebrating achievements in a meaningful way. Staff need to identify ways for young people to receive accredited awards for their achievements and build skills for learning, life and work. They also need to support young people to move on successfully when they leave school.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Spark of Genius Harbour Point School

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Self-evaluation for self-improvement	unsatisfactory
Safeguarding and child protection	unsatisfactory
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from How good is our school? (4th edition) , Appendix 3: The six-point scale .	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings will be available on the Education Scotland website at <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/inspection-reports/reports-page/?id=4400>

What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. HM Inspectors will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within six months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector