

18 January 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 Sidlaw View 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 visit to Sidlaw View 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**

Senior and middle leaders and staff continue to support children and their families very well at Sidlaw View Primary School. They offer a high level of care, and promote and nurture positive and respectful relationships across the school community. COVID-19 did not lessen the commitment of all staff to ensuring children's wellbeing. Staff cared for and nurtured children and their families very well through the periods of remote learning. Staff were proactive in contacting children and their families regularly, especially the most vulnerable, and children and their families could contact staff members whenever they wished. Parents spoke very highly of how staff communicated with them during the periods of remote learning. In some instances, COVID-19 had a positive effect on the development of relationships between the school and home. This was noticeable in situations where staff might have had difficulty previously in securing parental engagement.

After the first period of remote learning, COVID-19 had affected negatively children's reading at P1. To address this, staff helped parents to access a virtual hub, which allowed children to carry on reading with a virtual teacher. This helped most children to make good progress, especially during the second period of remote learning. When children returned to in-school learning, the headteacher identified a gap in children's learning and progress in literacy at P6 and P7. To address this gap, staff are continuing to provide increased, focused daily literacy work, including more regular assessment and target setting. After the periods of remote learning, children attending the nurture room found it difficult to return to school and work with a larger group of children. To reduce this difficulty and support children more effectively staff set up a second nurture room. COVID-19 also affected a few planned areas of school improvement, such as the development of the school curriculum. Whilst considerable development work did take place in this area, staff were unable to progress the work at the pace they intended.

COVID-19 continues to have an effect on the school community in terms of pupil and staff absence. Senior and middle leaders are managing this absence well.

## **Progress with recommendations from previous inspection**

Senior and middle leaders are demonstrating much stronger leadership, which prioritises areas of school improvement very well. They are also continuing very successfully to raise the expectations and aspirations of staff and children. All staff and children have worked hard to align more closely the clear vision, values, and aims, and they are embedding them well into the life of the school. There is a strong sense of community across the school.

Teaching and support staff demonstrate increased confidence in their work. All staff have led and participated in a range of professional learning, most of which links specifically to the school improvement plan. Staff are also involved in leading national and local authority-led initiatives and coaching programmes. A few staff have also received recognition from the General Teaching Council for Scotland for the high quality of their professional learning.

Senior and middle leaders are working well with a range of partners to support children. Partners speak very highly of the school, especially in relation to how staff communicate with them and enable them to participate in joint planning. They also speak positively of their experiences with children from Sidlaw View Primary School.

All staff are working very well to ensure that learning, teaching and assessment is of a consistently high quality to raise attainment. Improved learning, teaching and assessment is helping children to talk with increased understanding about their learning. Staff are engaging positively and successfully in work to raise children's attainment, especially in literacy. This involves almost all staff assessing children's progress, setting regular targets for and with children, and planning and implementing ways to help children meet their targets.

Senior and middle leaders and staff continue to develop the curriculum to ensure that children can build on their learning as they move through the school and have relevant motivating experiences. Widespread consultations have taken place with children, staff and parents to find out the range of contexts they wish to be included in the curriculum. Children are already benefitting from experiences linked to these contexts, such as work related to the Sidlaw Hills. Staff are continuing to engage in curriculum development work with colleagues from neighbouring schools and national partners.

All staff are meeting children's needs very well, and are continuing to develop the school's approaches to improving wellbeing, inclusion and equality. Teachers regularly monitor children's wellbeing in classes and demonstrate increased clarity about the needs of individual children. Teachers and support staff are also regularly monitoring children's health and wellbeing through individualised plans. These plans outline the range of ways in which the school is supporting children, including work with partners.

The school has met all areas for improvement in relation to safeguarding outlined during the most recent inspection.

### What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant effect on the school community. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. 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 its education service.

Celia McArthur  
HM Inspector