

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 Rockwell Learning Centre, 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 Rockwell Learning Centre. Our engagement helped us learn more about how young people and their families, have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support young people'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

During the first period of school closure in April 2020, senior leaders ensured personal support was available for all young people and families in its school community. The support prioritised and focussed on young people's wellbeing. School staff continued working with a few young people who required very targeted support. For these young people, the school building remained open. For all other young people, school staff provided valuable regular contact. By May 2020, senior leaders identified that a majority of young people were not benefiting fully from learning at home. Senior leaders, with support from the local authority, introduced opportunities for all young people to attend school for short periods during the school week. All initiatives introduced offered well-planned support for young people to re-engage with their learning safely.

By the second period of school closure in January 2021, senior leaders recognised the importance of keeping the school open. This resulted in most young people participating in more meaningful learning activities. Teachers supported young people well to achieve National Qualifications. Most young people have now successfully returned to full-time education and are engaging well with their learning.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, partnerships with external services were important in developing a wide range of skills for young people. Support from these services was withdrawn as a result of the pandemic. In response, school staff worked well together to plan and create purposeful learning experiences for young people. These new learning activities helped replace tasks normally developed and delivered by school partners. The school plans to reintroduce support from external services as part of their recovery from the pandemic.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Overall, significant progress has been made in taking forward recommendations from the original inspection.

Staff provide well-planned support to young people. This is better meeting young people's needs and aspirations. Young people in S4 and S5 gain a valuable combination of National Qualifications and wider achievement awards. Commendably, despite the challenges faced by the pandemic, all young people are being supported well to transition successfully into further education, training or the workplace upon leaving school.

The headteacher and depute headteacher have successfully improved their knowledge about the progress that young people are making in their learning. They have regular meaningful discussions with teachers about young people's engagement with school activities and progress made with their learning. These, discussions support the teachers plan relevant and interesting learning activities for young people. The headteacher and depute headteacher plan to gather more information to help them understand better how well the school delivers learning. The information gathered will support them identify what priorities they will have for next year.

Staff have improved how they plan and assess learning activities. This includes working with other schools to consider how well young people are progressing with their learning. There is an improvement in the range of appropriate subjects and qualifications which are available for young people. Overall, young people are improving their engagement with learning, attainment and achievement. Teachers will continue to work towards delivering increasingly consistent and high-quality learning experiences for all young people.

The headteacher and depute headteacher, supported by the staff team, have taken important steps to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of young people is central to the work of the school. Highly supportive staff are building positive relationships with young people. Young people feel safe and well respected in Rockwell Learning Centre. The school has allocated a key teacher to each young person and provides positive support for them and their family, including home visits. School staff will continue to focus on improving young people's attendance. Local authority officers and managers have agreed to monitor progress and support the school with improving attendance.

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 appropriate 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 of its education service.

David McKellar
HM Inspector