

15 February 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

In May 2021, HM Inspectors conducted a special inspection of Spark of Genius Harbour Point School at the request of Scottish Ministers and in accordance with section 66 (1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Spark of Genius Harbour Point School. In June 2021, HM Inspectors published a letter on the school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the headteacher and school proprietors. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Quality of the school's plans to improve its performance

The headteacher has been successful in introducing new and productive approaches to safeguarding and promoting positive relationships. He has continued to develop a more caring and purposeful culture across the school. Young people, parents and staff are more involved in decision-making at the school. Young people have better opportunities to make decisions about their learning and contribute to school improvement. Teachers include young people more in planning learning activities.

Overall, teachers are now reflecting better on the quality of their own performance and identifying ways to improve their practice. They are using a wider variety of teaching approaches and taking greater account of young people's interests and aspirations when planning learning activities. Staff now need to adopt a shared approach to assessment and monitoring young people's progress. This should help young people to raise their attainment and build skills in a more progressive way.

Supporting young people

Senior leaders and staff now have a clearer understanding of young people's additional support needs. Young people have more detailed support plans which include a summary of their needs and aspirations. Staff use these documents well to build on young people's strengths and to support them more effectively if they become anxious or upset. Young people need to have more involvement in setting targets and checking their own progress with their learning.

Most young people and their families are playing a significant role in planning young people's move to a new school, college or job. Young people are visiting other schools and sharing their needs and aspirations with staff. In most cases, their views are playing an important part in planning for when they move on from the school. The headteacher has taken on a strong supportive role for young people and has arranged valuable opportunities such as careers appointments and college interviews.

Safeguarding, child protection and promoting positive relationships

Senior leaders have improved approaches to child protection and safeguarding. Relevant guidance and policies are now understood by staff. They know better their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding, including reporting and recording. Young people now know who they would talk to if they had a concern.

Almost all staff are promoting a positive school culture and aiming to minimise the use of physical restraints. There has been a significant reduction in the use of safe holds. Young people report that physical intervention is no longer used. Strategies are in place to allow young people to manage their emotions and behaviour in an appropriate way. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection.

Young people's achievements

Most young people are building successfully their skills for learning, life and work. They are more able to communicate well, cope with change and exercise responsibility. Most young people contribute more effectively to learning activities and decision-making across the school. They are confident in expressing their views and sharing their needs and aspirations. They are more able to try new things and work as part of a team.

A minority of staff are measuring young people's achievements in a meaningful way. All staff now need to plan, promote and celebrate consistently young people's achievements. In doing so, staff should identify ways for young people to receive accredited awards for their personal achievements.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress in addressing the areas of improvement identified in the original inspection. The school proprietors have made the decision to close the school on 31 December 2021. HM Inspectors will therefore make no more visits in connection with the original inspection.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector