

20 February 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

**Rowantree Primary School and Nursery Class
Dundee City Council**

In June 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Dundee City Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting 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 children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time, and their report will be available at www.careinspectorate.com

Provide strong and sustained leadership to take forward significant improvements across the school to help children make the best possible progress.

The acting headteacher and enhanced management team have provided strong leadership, focussing very effectively on a clear need for positive relationships, behaviour and respect throughout the school. This clear focus, with high visibility of the senior leadership team in all areas of the school including classrooms and the playground, is having a very positive impact on relationships and behaviour. There is now a much calmer atmosphere, providing a more supportive environment for children to learn and achieve. Higher expectations are evident in many aspects of school life, impacting positively on children, parents and staff.

The school now has a strategy for raising attainment, and has set up arrangements for assuring the quality of its work. Senior leaders observe learning in classrooms and provide feedback to staff to support improvement. These developments are supporting more positive experiences for children. Children and staff are beginning to be more involved in leading improvements in the life of the school, and there is scope to involve them further.

Senior leaders now need to build on their success in improving relationships. The pace of change needs to be sustained and the next step is to raise children's attainment. Staff recognise the need for a more coherent and progressive curriculum in order to achieve this.

Ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences, including involving children in planning and reflecting on their own learning in order to improve attainment.

Children in the nursery are much more engaged in their learning. They are now more involved in planning what they will learn. Overall, practitioners are more responsive to children's individual needs. Changes to the organisation of the nursery playrooms have impacted positively on children's confidence and ability to make choices about what they want to play with and where.

Across the primary stages, staff have worked hard to create a welcoming ethos of learning in classrooms across the school, including by using positive reinforcement and nurturing approaches. These sensitive approaches are building children's self-motivation, engagement and respect for each other. Children are eager to learn and almost all interact well with their peers and teachers. There are some good opportunities for children to be actively involved in their learning. For example, in the majority of lessons, children have opportunities to work in pairs and in groups. In a few classes, they are able to set their own targets. Senior leaders are aware of the need to ensure that this good practice is adopted consistently across the school. This will help raise attainment.

Improve the school's approaches to assessment, tracking and monitoring to ensure there are clear processes in place which are used by staff to track, review and enhance children's progress in learning.

At the early level in the nursery, there has been a greater focus on gathering relevant information on children's learning. Progress is captured in children's learning journals and shared with parents.

Across the primary stages, teachers are now using a common planning format. This is helping ensure more consistently high-quality learning for children. The next step is to ensure teachers have a shared understanding of the standards they expect children to achieve.

The school is not yet tracking children's progress well enough to ensure they attain as highly as possible. There are gaps in aspects of children's learning which the school needs to address. The school has plans to improve its approaches to tracking children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Staff are aware of the need to share updates on children's progress regularly with parents, along with involving parents in supporting their children's learning.

Considerably improve arrangements for identifying and meeting children's learning needs.

Staff are more aware of children who require additional support in their classes and how to help them make progress. Across the school, the majority of children benefit from appropriately-planned tasks and activities which meet their differing learning needs. The senior leadership team and specialist staff are starting to analyse information from standardised assessment to improve how they identify children with additional needs. Children are supported better in class by a larger team of

specialist staff, and improved range of learning and teaching resources. A small number of children are benefiting from opportunities provided in the nurture class to develop their social skills and are learning how to treat others with respect. All these children also spend part of the week in class with their peers. Children attending the Enhanced Provision are responding positively to spending more time in their mainstream classes. The school should continue to increase the proportion of time children in the nurture class and in the Enhanced Provision spend in their mainstream classes.

The senior leadership team should continue to work collaboratively with staff to share good practice in meeting children's differing needs. This includes ensuring suitable plans are in place for individual children where required, and involving parents in creating and reviewing the plans. Staff should now be evaluating the impact of the steps they take to meet children's needs, including the nurture class, to ensure they are helping to raise attainment.

Develop clear and flexible progression pathways to support the planning and delivery of all curriculum areas from nursery through to P7, building on prior learning.

Practitioners in the nursery now take more account of children's individual needs in their planning of the curriculum. The revised learning environment also offers the children more opportunities to learn outside. Practitioners recognise that more needs to be done to further improve the outdoor learning spaces.

At the primary stages, there has been some progress in improving the curriculum. Learning using digital technologies has been enhanced throughout the school, through the provision of increased resources. Children reported the positive benefits of the increased after-school learning opportunities through the various clubs.

As a matter of priority, the school now needs to make further improvements to the curriculum, taking careful account of the context of the school and its community. Children, parents and partners should also be involved in the design of the curriculum.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. The pace of change needs to be sustained and the school requires more time to address fully the main points for action identified at the original inspection, this includes more targeted action to raise attainment, by providing a more coherent and progressive curriculum.

We will liaise with Dundee City Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of Rowantree Primary School within a year of publication of this letter. We will discuss with Dundee City Council the details of this further inspection. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Sally Stewart
HM Inspector

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