

1 March 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 Fallside 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 Fallside School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how the school supported young people and their families 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**

Staff in the school supported young people and their families well during periods of remote learning. Staff provided young people with resources for learning such as digital tablets and learning packs. Senior leaders and other staff made regular contact with parents to monitor the wellbeing of young people and their families. Staff worked well with partners such as social work and other local organisations, to help young people engage with support agencies. For example, school staff referred parents to local third sector organisations who had capacity for support during periods of remote learning. Staff responded well to the needs of young people and their families in practical ways. They delivered food and hygiene packages and supported young people in the community through an outdoor physical education programme.

Teachers ran a successful cooking project, sending food parcels and recipe ideas for young people to use. As a result, young people and their families learned to prepare a variety of healthy meals. Young people achieve the Saltire Award for participating in the cooking project. They learn about healthy eating and develop valuable food preparation skills. The family cooking project also links well to the school's outdoor learning programme, where young people grow food to cook at home.

Teachers are using outdoor spaces effectively. Outdoor education has improved throughout the school during COVID-19. This has resulted in a few young people achieving the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Saltire Award. Young people achieve a variety of awards by exploring the nature and history of their local area. The majority of young people participate in volunteering and mentoring within the community.

All young people in Fallside School have access to a digital device. Young people use this technology well to enhance their learning. Staff use digital technology to communicate effectively with learners and their families. The majority of young people who are unable to attend school due to COVID-19 use digital technology well to complete tasks and activities and communicate with teachers.

## Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Learning and teaching has improved since the last inspection in October 2019. Young people are more motivated and interested in what they are learning. During lockdown, teachers undertook professional learning to expand their subject knowledge. Teachers also participated in training where they explored as a team what constitutes a good lesson. As a result of improved teaching approaches, young people settle better in class and engage in their learning for longer periods. Previously, young people stayed in their own classroom with the same teacher for most lessons. Senior leaders reviewed the curriculum and restructured the school day. As a result, young people now have a wider choice of subjects and enjoy attending lessons in different locations throughout the school. Young people prefer this approach as they have more choice and it is more personalised to their needs and interests. At the senior phase, all teachers now deliver at least two courses leading to National Qualifications or wider achievement awards.

Teachers plan lessons well for individual learners and give thoughtful feedback about how young people can improve their learning. Each young person now has a mentor; this is a key teacher who young people talk to about their targets, attendance and wellbeing. Learners have weekly sessions with their mentor, recording their own progress. This helps young people focus on their goals and celebrate their achievements. Teachers send progress reports home to families each week. Young people and their families talk about learning and progress. Parents find this a helpful way to involve them in their child's learning.

Since October 2019, teachers have gathered more information about young people's learning and progress. This enables senior leaders to have a better overview of the quality of learning and teaching in the school. Senior leaders and teachers have a better understanding of young people's progress. Teachers use this detailed information well to identify strengths and next steps in young people's learning.

Teachers meet frequently with colleagues from other schools to share expertise, and to offer each other support and advice. Teachers now receive helpful and detailed information about young people moving to Fallside School. This information includes useful evidence about young people's progress with their learning. It also includes personalised strategies to help build good relationships with specific young people. Children's transitions from their primary schools to Fallside School are improving because of this new partnership working.

Since October 2019, almost all young people have made steady progress in their attainment. At the senior phase, young people are achieving more National Qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and staff should now ensure that young people achieve more across all areas of the curriculum.

Senior leaders and staff are working well with young people and families to increase young people's attendance. Staff recognise that for some young people, maintaining a good level of attendance is challenging. Young people meet individually with key teachers on a regular basis to discuss how to improve their school attendance. They are also working with Virtual School, Home School Partnership Officers and social work services to continue to improve attendance. Senior leaders are aware that the level of attendance for most young people is not yet at an acceptable level.

## 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 plans to support recovery. Staff have also been making progress in taking forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection. Teachers use a wider variety of assessments and plan learning to meet young people's needs better. The school has also made progress in improving young people's attainment. We recognise that the school needs more time to implement fully its priorities for improvement. We have asked North Lanarkshire Council to provide us with further information about the school's progress within one year of the publication of this letter. We will work together with local authority officers to agree what will happen next. North Lanarkshire 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.

Tracie McEwan  
HM Inspector