

21 December 2021

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 Dyce Primary School and Nursery Class, 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 Dyce Primary School and Nursery Class. 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, senior leadership management team and local authority officer the school and nursery'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

The school has used the context of the pandemic very well as an opportunity to bring about significant change to the learning and teaching approaches in the school and nursery. The new headteacher quickly involved all staff in evaluation of children's learning experiences. Together they identified the potential of learning outdoors. This was achieved by a 'hands on' approach, focusing on the increasingly motivating outdoor learning that children who attended the 'hub' provision experienced. Staff appreciated this time to pause and reflect and welcomed the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue about how to improve the educational offer for all children.

Change began in a small way with the introduction of 'Wellbeing Wednesdays'. These sessions had a clear focus on health and wellbeing for all children, supported through the context of outdoor learning experiences. The headteacher demonstrated an approach which has inspired teachers to be more creative and confident in reimagining the curriculum. In doing this, they have focused clearly on the aims of Curriculum for Excellence.

There have been a number of changes to the nursery staff team this session. Staff deliver the 1140 hours through a range of options that parents can choose. Practitioners currently have limited time to plan and review children's learning. It will be important to keep quality assurance approaches focused to ensure the improvements currently taking place to the learning environment are used well to secure progress for all children.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The school is making very strong progress since the original inspection and has successfully overtaken all areas for improvement. As a result, almost all children are highly motivated and fully engaged in their learning. Senior leaders, and increasingly staff, are using a relevant selection of useful data to help inform decision making. This has been very important in identifying children who need additional support through targeted interventions including

nurture. Senior leaders understand that it will be important to ensure that the interventions improve outcomes for all children.

The high level of morale now evident among staff in school is testimony to the impact of the change brought about by reimagining the curriculum. All staff now share an enthusiasm for learning. A strong partnership approach enhances whole school themes delivered through a series of exciting 'expeditions'. This approach has fired the imagination of all concerned and the result is high quality experiences that are mainly skills based. Outdoor learning is a key feature of the 'expeditions' and this is cleverly supported by high expectations of what children can achieve. There is strong evidence of leadership opportunities for all. Support assistants have flourished in this culture and undertake key roles in delivering and supporting high quality learning experiences for children. Staff use developing the young workforce principles very well. The school now has a range of active partners that contribute meaningfully to the planning and delivery of curriculum themes. For example, Adventure Aberdeen, an explorer and artist in residence, further enhances learning and challenges children through a broader range of experiences.

Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing are being developed well alongside other curricular areas. The school and nursery use a range of digital platforms well to share learning more widely. Staff are now skilled at using these approaches to support reflection and planning. Staff should continue, as planned, to ensure that self-evaluation is well-focused on evaluating the success of interventions to maximise attainment and achievement for all children.

The school is outward looking and eager to share practice more widely and should continue to do so. They are working well with local primary schools to develop approaches to planning and monitoring children's progress against national standards.

What happens next?

Understandably, Dyce Primary School and Nursery Class has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. They have successfully turned the challenges into opportunities to reflect on learning and teaching and brought about significant curricular change. In doing so, staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to Dyce Primary and Nursery Class in connection with the original inspection. Aberdeen City Council will continue to inform parents about the school and nursery's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service.

Mary Ann Hagan
HM Inspector