

17 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2019, HM Inspectors published a letter on Edinburgh Steiner School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Board of Trustees. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and young people, and worked closely with school leaders and staff. We heard from school leaders about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection visit. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's and young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Take action to improve the policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection. Ensure these processes are understood and followed by all staff across the school, and shared with parents and learners.

The school has made good progress towards meeting this point for action. Staff have sought advice from external organisations to inform their review of child protection and safeguarding procedures. As a result, school staff have updated child protection procedures to ensure they are now fully compliant with national guidance. The school is developing more robust and effective quality assurance procedures to monitor the effectiveness of child protection and safeguarding procedures. Staff remits have been clarified to ensure that responsibilities are clear, including for those with leadership roles and oversight of procedures. Since our last visit, all staff, volunteers and trustees have undergone child protection training.

The school has made a positive start to engaging expertise and experience from other agencies to develop staff's understanding of wellbeing issues. Staff should also explore ways to engage young people more effectively in identifying issues that affect them. Staff and stakeholders should now consider how the rights of children and young people could better inform the work of the school, particularly in relation to rules, sanctions and privileges.

Child protection officers, safeguarding coordinators, pastoral and support for learning staff now need to work more closely as one team, to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people.

The school has made satisfactory progress towards meeting this point for action. Staff have begun to establish more effective team working to develop a better overview of the needs of all children and young people. Staff with responsibility for pupil support, inclusion, wellbeing and child protection are beginning to work more closely to provide a more effective system to identify, address and meet the needs of children and young people. Staff have made significant improvements in record keeping and have identified ways in which this can be developed further. Staff need to ensure that parents are kept appropriately informed about all matters relating to their child's wellbeing needs.

The Board of Trustees and school leaders should continue to improve and clarify the arrangements for all stakeholders to allow concerns and ongoing issues to reach successful resolutions.

The school has made satisfactory process towards meeting this point for action. Following on from work being taken forward at the last visit, school leaders have continued to make improvements to the way that complaints and concerns from parents, staff and learners are handled. As a result, there are clearer procedures in place that define which members of staff will take forward and investigate complaints and concerns. There are better systems in place to record the outcomes of complaints and concerns. A few parents continue to feel that complaints are not always dealt with routinely well. School leaders should continue to develop and embed the new systems further, including checking with parents that successful resolutions to complaints have been reached.

The Board of Trustees has made improvements to the way that complaints are dealt with at governance level. A clearer system of appeals is now in place. There is a stronger focus amongst trustees on the importance of safeguarding and the assurance of high quality pastoral care across the kindergarten and school. Overall, trustees and school leaders are now better placed to assess where practice may need to improve, and they take brisker action to address any issues.

The Board of Trustees and school leaders should continue to improve the school's leadership and management systems to address fully the concerns of the school community.

The school has made satisfactory process towards meeting this point for action. Since our last visit, the school has taken action to strengthen its governance arrangements. Following the retirement of the previous chairperson at the end of academic year 2018/19, a new chair of the Board of Trustees was appointed. The Board has recently appointed new members, who each bring valuable skills and expertise to the governance of the school. The Chair of the College of Teachers and other school leaders work closely with the Board, sharing the successes and challenges in an open and transparent way. From the pre-visit questionnaires, the majority of staff and parents feel the school and kindergarten are led well. However, a minority of staff and parents would like to see more clarity within the management and leadership roles in the school.

School leaders have made a positive start to strengthening systems and processes for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They have introduced a new electronic information management system, which is helping to streamline record keeping. School leaders are more actively involved in reviewing teachers' plans, talking to children and young people about their learning, and carrying out visits to classes. They more readily take action where practice requires improvement. Staff have established helpful links with other schools in order to share good practice. Commendably, visiting teachers from other schools have observed lessons and joined in professional dialogue with teachers in the Edinburgh Steiner School.

Since the previous visit, the school has made good progress in establishing more formal ways to gather the views of children and young people. A student council for senior pupils is now in place. Members of the student council take their roles seriously and are beginning to

influence school improvement priorities. Building on this, there is potential for the school to include younger children in such leadership roles. In order to capture the wider views of learners, suggestion boxes have been placed across the school campus. As yet, not all children and young people understand the role of the student council or are aware of how they can contribute their ideas to improve their school experience. School leaders should continue to ensure that staff, parents, learners and stakeholders play an active role in school improvement.

What happens next?

The school has made satisfactory progress since the original inspection visit. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The Board of Trustees will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its school. The school's link HM Inspector will maintain contact with the school to check on further progress.

Lesley A Johnstone
HM Inspector