

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 Kirkriggs 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 virtual meeting followed by a visit to Kirkriggs School. Our engagement helped us to 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 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**

The school is a local authority provision for primary-aged children in Glasgow who have severe and complex additional support needs. During the first lockdown there was a significant need to support families, and they were contacted by school staff at least once a week to make sure that all was well. A family support worker also kept in regular contact with a number of children and families.

During the subsequent lockdown, there was a greater emphasis on home learning. Digital learning was available for families, although some preferred to have personalised, physical packs. Parents also received communication packs with symbols to help them to structure activities with their children. The children retained some of the communication skills learned when they returned to school and parents and carers have adopted some of those approaches to improve communication at home. This includes the use of symbols by children who have little or no spoken language. Parental support for digital learning was available by phone and the school also provided devices and access to WiFi where this was required. For those children who needed it, up to three days of learning was available in school. Approximately 25% of children took advantage of this. Parents who spoke to HM Inspectors were very positive about the support provided by the school.

The school has also used two of its initiatives to good effect in meeting the challenges of COVID-19, whilst developing the curriculum and making lessons more appropriate for children. The school was already planning to develop its approaches to outdoor learning, which reduces the likelihood of transmission. This has been taken forward with plans to develop further learning through indoor and outdoor play, initially for children in the younger classes. These approaches have helped to improve children's wellbeing and their concentration, leading to swifter progress in their achievement and attainment. There has been very positive support from parents for both initiatives.

A number of children have had wellbeing issues following lockdown. Whilst younger children appear to have been less affected, some older children have received very effective

wellbeing support, from behaviour support staff and educational psychology. Personalised learning programmes, focusing on wellbeing and nurture, have been helping these children to settle back into school full time. Staff are sensitive to the needs of these learners, helping them to re-engage with other children and with learning. In common with many schools, there have been challenges with staff and pupil absences due to the requirements for self-isolation.

### **Progress with recommendations from previous inspection**

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has been appointed permanently to her role. With the support of Glasgow City Council, she has refreshed and enhanced her leadership team. Additional teachers and support staff, partially funded by the COVID-19 Recovery Fund, have been appointed to meet better the needs of all children. The whole school community has contributed well to the school's refreshed vision. A new set of values – kindness, respect, trust and inclusion - is helping staff to recognise the positive impact they are having on the lives of children and their families. Staff are working together effectively to embed the new values. In particular, they demonstrate kindness to each other and through their work with children and their families.

Senior leaders and staff have carried out a significant amount of work developing and sharing improvement initiatives. The main aims of these are to improve teaching and to make the curriculum more individualised, appropriate and enjoyable for children. Since the original inspection, staff have developed their skills and knowledge through effective, targeted professional learning. Their involvement in training in intensive interaction, alternative communication and nurturing approaches has led to more consistent approaches across classes and has equipped staff better to meet children's individual needs. Despite the complications brought about by the pandemic, staff have put arrangements in place to make their assessment of children's learning as consistent as possible. Much of this work has taken place between teachers within the school. However, assessment activities have also taken place online with another primary school and there are plans to follow this up in-person as soon as conditions allow.

At the time of the original inspection, the school was introducing a new tracking and monitoring approach and it has now developed further its use of this system. Commendably, senior leaders have been working in collaboration with its manufacturer to ensure that this system works well for children attending Kirkriggs School. Staff have begun to take better account of children's achievements, linking these effectively with the main tracking and monitoring approach. Teachers have also improved their planning to reflect better the approach of the tracking and monitoring system. As a result, the school's procedures for planning learning and tracking and monitoring children's progress now work in harmony with each other. Senior leaders have introduced a system of monthly class awards with an annual award at the end of each year. They plan to develop further approaches to tracking and celebrating children's personal achievements, including what they are achieving at home and in the community.

### 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 addressed the recommendations from the original inspection extremely successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. Glasgow City 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.

Ken McAra  
HM Inspector