

11 June 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In October 2016, HM Inspectors published a letter on Dyce School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Aberdeen City Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in November 2017. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the 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.

Develop a more consistent use of robust data across the curriculum to inform improvements to learning and teaching and raise attainment so that all children are working to their potential.

A system has been implemented to monitor the progress children are making in their learning. Using information from this system, teachers have termly meetings with senior school leaders to discuss children's progress and identify and address any barriers to successful learning. This is supporting teachers to have a greater focus on improving outcomes for children. Attainment data for the latest year (2018-19) shows an improvement from the previous year and indicates that almost all children are achieving the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence level in literacy and numeracy at the early level, and most at the first and second levels. However, assessment information could be used more effectively by teachers to plan next steps in learning for all children. This would help to ensure that all children progress in their learning at an appropriate pace. We have asked teachers to continue to develop the use of tracking to ensure that all children make an appropriate rate of progress by engaging in tasks and activities that are well-suited to their individual needs. This will support all children to work more effectively to their potential. Practitioners in the nursery have continued to review their arrangements for planning children's learning experiences. Further work is still required to ensure that there is a clear and effective strategy for observation, planning and assessment in the nursery class.

Across the school and nursery, further develop effective self-evaluation processes to focus more directly on improving outcomes for all learners.

Senior leaders have established a calendar with a series of activities to better monitor and evaluate the work of the school. As a result, there are now greater opportunities for staff to evaluate their practice and provision. Teachers are making more effective use of the National Benchmarks and have more regular opportunities to discuss these together. This is helping them to make more robust judgements about how well children are achieving appropriate national standards in their learning. We have asked them to work together with teachers from other schools to develop further their understanding of national standards. This will help to ensure that judgements of children achieving levels of attainment are reliable. Opportunities for parents and children to be involved in school self-evaluation are increasing. However, a

significant minority of parents, and around half of children, do not feel that their views are taken account of sufficiently. We have asked senior school leaders to continue to engage parents, children and partners more effectively, and to a greater extent, in self-evaluation. A significant number of children feel that bullying is not dealt with effectively and do not feel safe and secure. As a result, we have asked Aberdeen City Council to take prompt action to support the school in making improvements in this area. Practitioners in the nursery have begun to use national guidance to help them reflect on the quality of their work and agree priorities for improvement. However, there has been limited progress in effective self-evaluation in the nursery.

Increase the pace of curriculum development across the school and nursery as a priority to ensure that all children's needs, aspirations and entitlements are fully met.

Senior leaders have developed a curriculum rationale to take account of national advice and align with the school values. This is an effective first step in developing an approach to curriculum planning and evaluation which takes appropriate account of the unique setting of Dyce School. The headteacher is planning to review the vision, values and aims for the school. This provides an appropriate opportunity to consider how the curriculum rationale might express more clearly what it offers to children. Much work has been undertaken to develop opportunities for children to use digital technology. Children are actively involved in this work through the 'tech club' and recently gained national recognition at the Scottish Learning Festival. There are more opportunities for children to learn outdoors. Parents and children speak positively about this recent development. Nursery practitioners need to increase their knowledge and understanding of what is expected to ensure children make appropriate progress in all areas of the curriculum. The nursery environment requires substantial improvement to help promote positive learning experiences for young children. Ongoing work on improving the outdoor area for children is in place with the support of an external consultant. Practitioners now need to consider how best to manage effectively the numbers of children wishing to go outside to play. Overall, there remains the need to ensure that staff across all stages, including the nursery, have opportunities to work collaboratively to develop the curriculum. This will help to support the continuity of children's learning and progress. We have asked the school to review approaches to identifying and meeting the needs of children who have additional needs in their learning to ensure that these are met consistently well at all times.

Further develop leadership at all levels, including children leading learning, to ensure this effectively improves outcomes for all children.

There are more opportunities for children to lead developments across the school. This is helping them develop confidence and skills in leadership. For example, there are a number of pupil participation groups, such as outdoor learning and eco-schools, that have been established. Nursery practitioners are keen to take forward children's ideas of what they want to learn next. They will require continued support to achieve this. The senior leadership team needs to work more effectively together in order to set the direction for the school and nursery, to clarify expectations and standards and model effective practice. Working with teachers, practitioners, children, parents and partners, they need to develop a greater shared sense of direction and purpose. More effective strategic leadership is required to ensure that all staff work together effectively to improve the school. Nursery practitioners require more support from senior leaders in order to develop their own leadership skills.

What happens next?

We recognise, that whilst the school has continued to face staffing challenges insufficient progress has been made since our last visit. We will liaise with Aberdeen City Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Aberdeen City Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

David R Drysdale
HM Inspector