

8 February 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 Hazelwood 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 Hazelwood School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how staff and partners are supporting children, young people and their families through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children and 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

COVID-19 has impacted significantly on all children, young people, families, and staff at the school. All members of the school community are concerned about the continuing risks linked to the virus. Staff and parents are understandably anxious about the vulnerability of children and young people due to their highly complex medical needs.

The headteacher maintains a strong focus on following guidelines and protocols to keep everyone safe. She works hard to ensure that the wellbeing of children, young people, families and staff remains a high priority at all times. Following COVID-19 guidance and protocols can restrict what teachers are able to plan for learners. Staff are creative and take well considered steps to ensure that learning experiences are interesting and relevant for children and young people. This includes increased use of digital technology and outdoor learning. Senior leaders face ongoing challenges in coping with staff absences, managing issues with school transport, and ensuring high quality transition planning for school leavers.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the headteacher recognises that the pandemic has led to some benefits for the school. For example, staff are communicating better with parents, leading to a closer connection with parents and families. All staff have improved significantly their skills in the use of digital technology, and are making increased use of outdoor learning. Staff are also working more closely as a team, supporting each other well and sharing practice.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Led effectively by the headteacher and senior leadership team, staff have made strong progress in taking forward areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.

All staff have positive relationships with children and young people. Staff know the needs of learners well and show great care in their interactions with them. Staff engage in helpful professional learning to improve their skills in meeting children's and young people's complex

additional support needs. They are raising their expectations of what learners can do and are beginning to challenge them more consistently to achieve more.

High quality professional learning is supporting all staff to improve their skills in using digital technology. Staff are making more effective use of aids to support communication, including switches, eye gaze and assistive technology. This is enabling children and young people to engage better in learning. All learners have their own tablet computers, which is increasing their motivation to learn and helping them to participate more readily in classroom activities.

Teachers are making good use of the helpful information in learner profiles to plan learning activities centred around children's and young people's individual needs. Senior leaders have introduced helpful new planning formats. Teachers are working together well to plan learning experiences using the new formats. As a result of more personalised learning activities, children and young people have increased motivation and are engaging well in their learning.

Senior leaders are supporting teachers to use assessment approaches better to identify learners' strengths and to understand when small steps of progress are made. Teachers evidence progress in learning well through the use of annotated pictures and videos, which are shared with parents. Senior leaders meet with staff every term to discuss learners' progress and attainment. Senior leaders listen intently to them as they describe the small steps of progress that children and young people are making. They also encourage and challenge staff effectively to support learners to make greater progress.

Teachers meet regularly as a group to share their planning and to discuss the progress individual children and young people are making. They review samples of learners' work to ensure that their evaluations of children's and young people's progress are in line with national expectations. Teachers also liaise well with teaching colleagues in another local special school to share practice and support consistency in their professional judgements. In relation to the senior phase, teachers meet regularly to consider their assessment evidence for nationally recognised awards. As a result, teachers are developing a better understanding of national standards and are gaining confidence in their professional evaluations of learning. As planned, senior leaders should continue to support teachers with their approaches to assessment and monitoring the quality of professional evaluations about learners' progress.

Senior leaders have worked effectively with partners to improve the curriculum and make it more relevant for learners at the school. Principal teachers are working purposefully to lead curriculum developments that provide improved learning activities for children and young people. For example, the introduction of the principles of play from the nursery to P1, and learning about different world religions and cultures. There is now a stronger focus on developing learners' skills for life and work such as communication and independence. Senior leaders are increasing the range of National Qualifications on offer to young people. Almost all learners in the senior phase successfully attained at least two National Qualifications course awards in the past two years. Teachers are successfully increasing the number of ways for children and young people to achieve awards for their achievements. In response to parental requests, staff focus mainly on identifying awards for learners based on important life skills, such as riding a bike. In the senior phase, young people are developing skills of decision making and independence well through making choices about what they learn based on their own interests. As planned, senior leaders and staff should continue to

refine and develop the curriculum. This includes continuing to broaden the range of qualifications and awards that children and young people can attain and achieve.

What happens next?

Understandably, senior leaders have been working hard to respond to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing well-considered plans to support recovery. Senior leaders and staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection 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.

Liz Angus
HM Inspector