

3 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2019, HM Inspectors published a letter on Sidlaw View Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Dundee City Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting 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.

Senior leaders need to demonstrate stronger leadership which prioritises areas of school improvement in a well-judged and focussed way. They also need to raise expectations and aspirations amongst staff and children throughout the school.

The acting headteacher and acting depute headteacher are providing strong leadership and working well with staff, children, parents and partners to prioritise and address areas of improvement at pace. A targeted improvement plan is in place, which identifies actions the school has taken to address areas for improvement. This plan also highlights current work and next steps. Children on the pupil council and learning council are now involved in evaluating the school's work and working closely with staff to plan ongoing improvement. Senior leaders enable children to engage more fully in the life of the school and share their views more regularly. As a result, children's self-esteem has improved. Children have been involved recently in developing and promoting the school values. Senior leaders and staff model well these values in their actions. Most staff show increased willingness and confidence to lead aspects of the school's work and they have higher aspirations and expectations of themselves and the children. Senior leaders work closely with a range of partners. Partners note an increased sense of purpose in the school and appreciate how they are encouraged to plan jointly with senior leaders. Whilst the school has made good progress in this key area of improvement, much work is still in the early stages of development. Further work is needed to align the school vision and values with the aims. Additionally, senior leaders need to continue to develop the capacity of staff, strengthening the culture of professional learning and nurturing the renewed sense of community across the school.

All staff need to work together more effectively to ensure that learning, teaching and assessment is of a consistently high quality to raise attainment.

Good progress has been made to develop whole school processes and approaches to support learning, teaching and assessment. These are helping staff create a calm, purposeful learning environment in most classes, with fewer interruptions to learning and teaching. The acting headteacher and acting depute headteacher are highly visible around the school and have established their office next to the classrooms. This is helping them support staff in a more effective and timely manner. Senior leaders are working well with a range of partners to plan more appropriate learning experiences for children who need extra help. The school has begun to develop a 'Sidlaw View Standard'. This is helping staff deliver more consistent approaches to high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school to raise

attainment. In the majority of lessons, most children now engage well with their learning and listen carefully to instructions. They respond well to praise. Most children are also beginning to develop skills in pair and group work, and in using digital technologies. Although most staff provide improved feedback to children to help them improve their work this remains an area for development. Staff have participated in a range of professional learning opportunities to develop further their skills in learning and teaching. They are now more confident and increasingly skilled in sharing the purpose of learning with children, and helping children understand how to be successful. Local authority staff have supported teachers well. In particular, staff engagement with the local authority literacy team is helping them teach reading to a more consistent high-quality standard. Teachers have developed a shared understanding of approaches to providing literacy and numeracy work that meets the needs of individual children. To further support the school's work in raising attainment, the headteacher has developed a range of high-quality planning and recording tools to enable teachers to plan and assess children's learning more effectively. The headteacher has also developed approaches to monitoring and tracking children's progress across the curriculum. These approaches help staff maintain a clearer focus on children's progress. Staff need time now to implement agreed developments fully, helping ensure all children enjoy high quality experiences across the curriculum. Staff are working well to resolve the challenges of a few children who continue to find it difficult to settle and focus on learning and a few children who are not yet in receipt of full-time education.

Develop the curriculum to ensure that children can build on their learning as they move through the school and have relevant motivating experiences.

Staff have acted promptly to offer children an improved curriculum experience. They have developed a draft plan for the curriculum which reflects better the unique setting of Sidlaw View. Clear pathways are in place for all curriculum areas to help teachers ensure that children can build on their learning as they move through the school. These also help improve teachers' confidence in understanding progression and standards within and across Curriculum for Excellence levels in all curriculum areas. Teachers are now well placed to build on children's learning through each stage of their learning. Staff work well together to offer children a broad general education (BGE). They plan learning across all curriculum areas across the school year. Children enjoy their new learning in science and religious and moral education and are proud of their achievements in music. They enjoy particularly numeracy and writing and are highly motivated and excited when they can learn outdoors. There is still work to be done in consulting with parents and partners to ensure that everyone has a shared ownership and understanding of the curriculum. A next step for the school is to develop children's knowledge and skill in social studies and art and design. Senior leaders recognise too that the school needs to refresh its approaches to modern languages. Staff should continue to plan to ensure that all children benefit from a progressive and relevant BGE.

As a matter of priority, ensure that all children's needs are met. Staff should now develop approaches to improving wellbeing, inclusion and equality.

The school has made good progress in developing approaches to improve wellbeing, inclusion and equality. There is now a much-improved ethos across the school, enhanced by respectful relationships between most children and staff. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have developed partnership working to help staff meet the needs of all

children effectively. Senior leaders acknowledge there is still work to be done in liaising with partners to meet the emotional and learning needs of a few children. Joint planning is now taking place more consistently between the school and partners to provide well-judged universal and targeted support for children. Senior leaders work with staff, parents and partners to develop and review plans that support children's learning. They are setting focused learning targets for children that take account of their prior learning and barriers to learning. They are also beginning to review children's progress towards meeting these targets and setting new targets as required. Children benefit from one-to-one support, group support and a variety of new and exciting experiences and opportunities to meet their learning needs. Senior leaders have used Pupil Equity Funding well to provide much of this support. Children's needs are also met more effectively now during morning breaks and lunchtimes. Senior leaders have made improvements to outdoor spaces, for example making adaptations to the playground and adding new playground equipment and games. This is supporting children to play and engage with one another more effectively. The school needs to develop further its approaches to promoting positive behaviour to ensure all children continue to feel safe and happy. As the school continues to improve, school leaders recognise the need to monitor regularly the impact of new strategies and interventions to ensure they meet children's needs well.

What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Dundee 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 Dundee 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.

Celia McArthur
HM Inspector