

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 Moore House Academy, Butterstone we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the Board of Governors and carried out a visit to Moore House Academy, Butterstone. Our engagement helped us learn more about how young people and their families, have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support young people's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and Board of Governors 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 headteacher has a clear understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on learners and their families. Staff support children and young people well to learn using online platforms. Staff delivered resources such as musical instruments, sports equipment and art materials to learner's homes. This supported children and young people to engage well in planned, personalised learning activities at home.

Shortly after the first national lockdown began, staff realised that a few children and young people were not engaging sufficiently well in online learning activities. Teachers provided a greater variety of learning activities including more practical tasks. They also made visits to children's and young people's homes, where possible. This supported almost all children and young people to engage more meaningfully in their learning.

A minority of children and young people's wellbeing was affected negatively because they could not attend school physically during lockdown. As a result, senior leaders reopened the school in May 2020 to ensure that any children and young people experiencing anxiety were able to attend. At school, children and young people learned in 'bubbles' to ensure continuity of education from a small group of familiar staff and to minimise unnecessary contact with others. This helped learners maintain positive relationships with staff and peers within a safe environment. Staff arranged a range of virtual events throughout the school year, including assemblies and shows. These events supported children and young people well to experience as many normal school activities as possible. Regular social events throughout the school year support the strong sense of community in the school.

As a result of COVID-19 a few young people have been unable to access learning with community partners. While staff responded well by offering outdoor learning in the school grounds, these activities do not offer the range of opportunities previously provided by partners. Staff meet regularly to discuss how they can address these issues and make further adaptations to the school curriculum.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Senior leaders have introduced a staffed reception desk at the school's front door. This has improved security and is helping to keep everyone who uses the building safe and secure. Senior leaders have reorganised the location of classrooms throughout the campus. This reorganisation offers dedicated classrooms for languages, information communication technology and hospitality. The school's child protection and safeguarding policy has been revised and takes better account of national guidance. All staff undertake regular child protection and safeguarding training. They are confident in fulfilling their responsibilities to keep children and young people safe from harm. Children and young people are learning important skills in how to keep themselves safe online.

The headteacher leads the school effectively. She is supporting staff to plan learning in line with national guidance. Learning activities are meeting children's and young people's needs well. Well-planned, relevant professional learning is supporting staff's understanding of trauma, adverse childhood experience and autism. This helps them plan more challenging and interesting lessons, better matched to children's and young people's needs.

Staff, parents and learners are developing their skills well in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. Newly-introduced questionnaires and regular discussions with senior leaders and staff give parents good opportunities to express their views on the performance of the school. Senior leaders meet regularly with staff and the student council to discuss what needs to improve at the school and agree next steps. The views of learners often lead to positive developments in the school. For example, the introduction of shorter lesson times is supporting children and young people to engage more purposefully in their learning. Senior leaders now need to ensure that the work of the school continues to improve.

Teachers have developed a collaborative approach to planning learning activities which is built on prior learning. They use the school environment and resources, including digital technologies, effectively to promote learners' curiosity. Children and young people now have a significant say in their learning. Teachers are developing a range of approaches to track and monitor children's and young people's progress more effectively. Most staff need additional time to fully embed these approaches into their practice. Staff now need to continue to develop creative approaches to using the information gathered from tracking and monitoring. This will enable them to support planning next steps in children's and young people's learning more effectively.

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 also been making progress in taking forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection. We recognise that the school needs some more time to implement fully its priorities for improvement. We have asked Moore House Group to provide us with further information about the school's progress within one year of the publication of this letter. We will work together with Moore House Group to agree what will happen next. Should we require another visit to the school, we will inform parents/carers. Otherwise, Moore House Group 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.

Graeme Gordon
HM Inspector