

17 December 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In July 2019, HM Inspectors published a letter on Orchard Brae School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we had agreed with the school and Aberdeen City Council. 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. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at

www.careinspectorate.com

Senior leaders and staff should implement approaches to evaluating the work of the nursery and school that accurately identify what needs to be improved. All staff need to be more involved in school improvement.

Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team and the education authority have addressed the areas that required immediate action, such as improving approaches to safeguarding and child protection. The majority of staff are now involved in school improvement and are taking responsibility for leading on identified areas for development. For example, leadership groups are in place to improve communication approaches for children and young people. Staff are engaging in professional learning to support them to evaluate their practice and identify areas for improvement. There is not yet a thorough understanding of self-evaluation to inform improvements. Senior leaders should continue to support staff to develop a better understanding of self-evaluation. This should include engagement with national guidance and opportunities to visit other establishments. The senior leadership team has set out their plans for improvement and how they will evaluate the quality of the work of the school. We have asked them to include more detail about the impact of actions and ensure they are achievable within realistic timescales.

In nursery classes, a positive start has been made to support practitioners to meet regularly to discuss and reflect upon their work. Plans are now in place to support staff to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in the nursery. Staff now need to use best practice guidance to develop their skills in implementing recent approaches to self-evaluation. New leadership responsibilities have been identified for most nursery practitioners. In taking forward these leadership roles, practitioners will need ongoing support and guidance to identify how changes they make in the nursery impact on outcomes for children.

There is a need to increase planned learning opportunities to ensure there is high-quality learning and teaching for all children and young people across the school and nursery.

The senior leadership team is aware that improving the quality of learning, teaching and assessment remains a priority. Recent changes to daily timetables are providing more structured learning activities for children and young people. This is a positive first step in

improving learning and teaching. Staff should continue to review their practice to ensure children and young people are involved in high-quality learning throughout the day. In a few classes within the school, there is an improved focus on individualised learning. This is resulting in a minority of children and young people demonstrating better levels of engagement. There remains the need to ensure all children and young people are supported and challenged in their learning. Plans are now in place for senior leaders to monitor the quality of learning and teaching and the targets that children and young people are working towards.

Recent changes to the learning environment and the use of resources in the nursery have improved the quality of learning and teaching. Children have better opportunities to explore and investigate. High-quality interactions between children and staff are resulting in improvements in children's communication skills.

Review and develop curriculum frameworks in all subject areas, starting with literacy, numeracy and health wellbeing.

Improvements in developing the curriculum in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing remains a priority for the school. The school should continue with its plans to review curriculum frameworks and develop appropriate progression pathways for all children and young people. Work has started to review curriculum areas such as health and wellbeing for senior pupils.

With support from external specialists, the nursery team have begun to make significant changes to their outdoor learning area. Staff should continue with their plans to develop further approaches in facilitating high-quality outdoor learning. In the nursery, changes to transport arrangements and deployment of staff mean that all children now access specialist input in areas such as music.

There needs to be a greater focus on improving the wellbeing of all learners. Approaches to safeguarding and child protection need to be improved and follow education authority guidance.

The school and nursery, supported by the education authority, have undertaken a review of safeguarding and child protection approaches as advised in the previous inspection. Staff have participated in professional learning to develop their understanding of child protection approaches. This has resulted in improvements in the reporting and recording of concerns and staff are more confident in meeting their responsibilities. Staff are aware that they need to develop progressive health and wellbeing pathways across the school and nursery. As a result of a review of food, there is now an approved range of food and drinks that are deemed suitable for children and young people. Improvements to the dining area and lunchtime routines are impacting positively on learners. Children and young people have better opportunities for social interaction and they are becoming more independent. School staff and catering staff have worked well together to accommodate changes to the dining environment.

In the nursery class, carefully considered changes to the environment, such as an expansion to the nursery space, have had a positive impact on children's wellbeing. There is now a calm

and purposeful learning environment in place that facilitates play, learning and positive interactions.

Raise attainment and achievement across the school and nursery and increase expectations of what children and young people can achieve.

The school is at the early stages of improving the progress and attainment of children and young people. Staff are exploring a range of accredited awards to recognise children's and young people's achievement across the school. The introduction of accredited courses for senior pupils has resulted in better engagement in learning activities. There is also an improved focus on skills for life and work. Senior leaders and staff should ensure all learning activities are sufficiently challenging to enable children and young people to attain and achieve as highly as possible.

In the nursery class, practitioners should continue to improve the quality and consistency of their observations of children's learning. Individualised targets and focused next steps should be used to inform the planning of learning and teaching. This will help ensure that children make the best possible progress.

What happens next?

The school has made early progress since the original inspection. 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 six months 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.

Monica McGeever
HM Inspector