

12 March 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Linn Moor Residential School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and young people 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 and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's and young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

The school needs to take a more frequent and rigorous approach to how it gathers, and analyses, information about the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The recently appointed headteacher is well respected by staff. She has a clear understanding of the development needs of the school. She is beginning to work effectively to evaluate the school's progress in meeting the school improvement priorities and is identifying future areas for development. She recognises the need to introduce more rigorous and robust self-evaluation practices to ensure improved outcomes for all children and young people. All staff show a commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. They feel listened to, valued and respected. They work well as a team, share practice and give peer support. They are starting to work together to reflect on aspects of their practice and to identify priorities for the future. This is beginning to lead to a shared understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Almost all staff are beginning to recognise that self-evaluation is an important aspect of the school's approach to continuous improvement. They are starting to link school evaluation to the quality indicators from *How Good Is Our School?* (4th edition). They are collaborating with each other and expressing their views about whole school developments. Staff know that their views are taken into account, for example, the review of the thematic web and planning community outings.

Increase opportunities for children, young people and staff to have a say in school improvement.

Most children and young people express their views in the classrooms, making choices for snack and activities. Relationships between staff and children and young people are positive and staff know each child and young person well. Children and young people observed in classrooms were calm and interested, at their own level, in learning activities. Staff respond well to children's and young people's engagement in learning and are skilled at bringing children's and young people's attention back to task, when necessary. Children and young people vote about the wider achievement activities they want the school to develop for them. Chosen activities include swimming, trampolining, owl and pet therapies, and the involvement of community helpers in the life of the school.

The school is beginning to more rigorously seek the views of children and young people. Children and young people are beginning to lead their own learning. They indicate, using smiley faces, what aspects of a theme they want to learn. In partnership with the speech and language therapist, children and young people are communicating their emotional wellbeing using symbols. 'Have your say' forms are used to enable all children and young people to express their views about what they like and don't like about their school. The school is at the early stage in collating and analysing information from these forms to inform school improvement.

Staff feel empowered by the headteacher to come forward with ideas to improve the school. They know they are listened to and that the headteacher works hard to meet their aspirations for the school. They are happy to take on leadership roles across the school. Teachers take on lead responsibilities including, curriculum, senior phase, health and wellbeing and outdoor learning whilst recognising that literacy and numeracy are the responsibility of all staff. They recognise and value the need for their career-long professional learning to be linked to their new responsibilities to build further their confidence in meeting learner's needs.

Continue to improve the curriculum to ensure all children and young people experience consistently well planned learning pathways.

The school has introduced termly thematic units at the broad general education (BGE). These have been developed taking as full account as possible of children's and young people's interests.

The school has reviewed their staffing structure to provide clear roles for teachers in the delivery of the BGE and senior phase. This clarity is supporting teachers to take on increased levels of responsibility in developing, and delivering, the curriculum at both the BGE and senior phase. Teachers' are now much clearer as to their responsibilities in ensuring children and young people attain to the highest possible level and are accredited for their work wherever possible.

Continue to raise attainment for all children and young people.

The headteacher has introduced a system for tracking and monitoring children's progress in the BGE. This captures very useful data on how well children are progressing within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. As a result, teachers now feel more confident that they are planning lessons which provide improved pace and challenge based on the assessment evidence the database provides. The system is still too new to have gathered sufficient data to evidence any impact improved monitoring and tracking is having on children's attainment.

Young people at the senior phase have opportunities for attainment through a range of personal development, and achievement, awards. The newly developed thematic units at the BGE provide support for an improved transition into the senior phase. This ensures young people are working towards qualifications and awards which are appropriate to young people's needs and future aspirations.

What happens next?

The school has made positive progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within one year of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Board of Trustees that we intend to take.

Sue Williams
HM Inspector