

Summarised Inspection Findings

Aspire Education (Kilbirnie)

SEED No: 8280347

26 June 2018

1.3 LEADERSHIP OF CHANGE

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. The themes are:

- *Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community*
 - *Strategic planning for continuous improvement*
 - *Implementing improvement and change*
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- The school became part of the Priory Group in November 2017, having previously been an independent institution. There is currently a clear vision, values and aims for Aspire Education, which have been in place for some time. It will be helpful for the school to revisit these with partners and stakeholders as the school's context has changed recently and this needs to be taken into account.
 - Staff show commitment to professional standards. Several teachers have only recently been appointed to the school and there has been significant change in staffing in the past year. There has also been a change of management of the service and some changes in expectations, although the Priory Group feels that the Aspire Education values articulate well with theirs.
 - Staff know children and young people well, and work hard to address their particular needs and to help them to re-engage with education. Staff have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural background of the children and young people who attend the school. The school could do more to collect and analyse appropriate data to inform the next steps for children and young people.
 - The school has an effective link with the local community through the café which is situated at the front of the building and is open to the general public. The school is also engaging with the community through its developing links with local schools to undertake collaborative working and moderation of assessment standards.
 - The school has a quality assurance improvement calendar which outlines timings for particular evaluative activities such as classroom observations of learning and teaching. However, the school now needs to review its approach to self-evaluation to ensure that all staff and stakeholders are fully involved and that it accurately identifies next steps which will lead to improvements in outcomes for children and young people. More work needs to be done to involve partners in reviewing the work of the school and planning for improvement. Partners are extremely keen to be part of this ongoing work.
 - The headteacher creates the conditions for staff to suggest and promote change which will improve outcomes for children and young people. Senior managers are supportive of staff undertaking professional learning opportunities to improve the provision for children and young people.

- Some staff have been making suggestions for change and attending related professional learning opportunities. The headteacher is aware that suggested changes need to be sustainable and clearly linked to the school's development priorities. It would be helpful for staff to meet more frequently as a group to discuss these priorities to develop opportunities for children and young people to learn more effectively.
- Staff are skilled in assessing risk for children and young people, but less skilled at assessing risks related to curriculum change. Teachers and support staff need to have a clear understanding of the curriculum rationale for Aspire Education before considering changes which will be in keeping with this and will improve outcomes for children and young people. The school should revisit its curriculum rationale as part of a wider consideration of its curriculum offer for children and young people.
- The school improvement plan has been significantly changed in recent months to streamline priorities and to make progress more achievable. The headteacher has worked hard to develop relationships with staff, parents, children and young people, and other stakeholders and plans to work with them all to take forward the priorities for the school.
- Staff are responding positively to the leadership of the headteacher and to the change in overall management of the school. The headteacher, depute headteacher and principal teacher have had limited time to undertake their management roles in the school until relatively recently, which has restricted opportunities to implement and facilitate change. There have also been several recent appointments of new staff. The school should now work to develop leadership at all levels, using the skills and talents of all staff.

2.3 LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences for children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- *Learning and engagement*
 - *Quality of teaching*
 - *Effective use of assessment*
 - *Planning, tracking and monitoring*
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- Across the school, there is a well-established culture that promotes positive relationships, nurture and engagement. Staff fully demonstrate the core values of the school through all interactions. Staff understand the barriers that children and young people may experience when approaching learning, such as complex additional support needs or behaviour issues. They provide consistent supportive approaches to reduce the presenting barriers. Children and young people remain on task and engage with learning across most learning activities.
 - Teachers and support staff work in effective partnership with the EduCare team to promote learning across all aspects of the children's and young people's day, including their time in residential care. Most children and young people accessing school demonstrate improved engagement within learning contexts. According to the school's data, almost all children and young people have low attendance recorded from previous educational provisions. All children and young people increase their attendance at school after beginning their education placement at Aspire Education.
 - Digital technology is being used in a variety of ways across the school. This is evident in learners using desktop publishing programs to design presentations and to support writing activity. Digital technology is also used effectively for learners to engage with sensitive aspects of online safety. The school is beginning to explore the use of technology to support learners with specific learning needs.
 - The children and young people speak highly of the support they experience and feel that the recent move to three class groups has benefitted their learning. The children and young people feel listened to and understand that they are valued members of the school community. The school has an active pupil council that is involved in decision making processes within the school context. The children and young people are currently involved with an architect in redesigning and improving the education space. The children and young people have noticed the reduction in computer equipment around the school but also recognise that new equipment is being purchased. Children and young people would like more independence to move around the education building. However, they do understand the requirement for supervision in public areas.
 - The school ensures that there is a range of educational opportunities available to the children and young people. There is creative use of subject specialists to enhance the curriculum in areas such as music, physical education, photography,

coding, beauty therapy and outdoor education. The children and young people value this contribution to their learning. Generally, classroom spaces are organised and supportive of positive learning and teaching.

- Children's and young people's experiences in some contexts were not appropriately planned around their level of need. Teaching staff should take more account of prior learning and consider appropriate differentiation to provide suitable challenge. Staff offer a high level of supervision and support throughout each activity which can sometimes limit learner independence. There are some examples of activities which are designed to create opportunities for children to lead their learning, however, this was not consistent across all contexts. More creative approaches to learning and teaching would further enhance children and young people's learning within school.
- Most teaching staff are beginning to use assessment approaches to inform judgements about children's and young people's progress with learning. There are some examples of strategies being used well to provide feedback on children and young people's progress, successes and areas for improvement. However, this was not consistent across all learning activities. The school should develop the use of assessment for learning approaches to help ensure assessment strategies are consistently used across all aspects of learning and that quality feedback is being given to learners.
- Teachers are beginning to use national benchmarks to ensure breadth of learning and inform planning for future learning. Ongoing assessment is not fully established within planning. Staff should continue to explore more rigorous and robust assessment approaches to provide a basis for planning future learning. Teachers would benefit from further moderation activities, both within the school and with other schools, to inform professional judgement and use this to plan for improvements in learning.
- The children and young people often arrive with limited information relating to prior learning and achievements. The school effectively uses baseline assessments throughout this initial transition period to establish levels and design relevant programmes of activity and learning. The school is using Individualised Educational Programmes (IEPs) to show progress in relation to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The school now needs to develop monitoring and tracking systems to produce reliable data and evidence regarding how well children and young people are progressing with learning, attainment and achievement.

1.4 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF: theme 1

Governance framework

- The school has recently been acquired by the Priory Group. The Priory Group's policy is "to provide the highest quality of education and care in a safe and positive environment" which promotes a quality culture. The group has established a revised governance structure appointing two School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and an Education Advisor. The appointees are experienced within a Scottish context and are known to many of the staff. There has been a strong focus on ensuring a smooth integration to help staff feel secure during this period of change.
- The SIPs, supported by the Priory Group, are in the process of supporting school improvement. They are beginning to develop a partnership with the headteacher on key areas of improvement planning, new quality and safety protocols and recruitment of additional teaching staff. The SIPs are actively involved in recruitment and selection procedures for new teaching posts.
- Staff, parents and partners report that the learning environment of the school has improved since the acquisition. Most rooms have been redecorated with carpets and furniture, and have new computers with updated software. The school has started a consultation with architects to further develop the school building to create more learning and teaching areas. Parents would welcome an opportunity to be involved in this consultation to share their ideas.
- The SIPs and Education Advisor have clear lines of accountability for monitoring complaints or safeguarding concerns arising in the school. The establishment of similar approaches to the monitoring of children and young people's progress and achievement would ensure a continued focus on improvement.

2.4 PERSONALISED SUPPORT: theme 2 Targeted Support

- The school has established effective systems to ensure comprehensive information is available to staff at the point of children beginning their school placement. This supports staff with effective transition planning and offers an understanding of learning needs. Every child and young person has a comprehensive pupil profile in place at the beginning of their school placement. The school continues to ensure that planning is undertaken in partnership with local authorities, based upon the needs of the children and young people.
- Children and young people have access to a very high level of support within class settings and activities at all times. Staff remain responsive to the needs of the children and young people and have a good understanding of individual barriers to learning. Targeted approaches are evident across the school which promotes positive re-engagement with learning. In addition, the consistently high level of support is having positive outcomes in relation to the children and young people's wellbeing.
- Effective liaison between care and education staff offers continuity of support across care and school contexts. Children and young people respond to this positively and are able to communicate how having safe and secure adult relationships built throughout the school day supports their capacity to engage with learning.
- Targets within IEPs need to be more specifically related to additional support needs. Current target setting is more closely linked to general learning outcomes that children and young people should experience as part of their curriculum. The school should develop further their tracking of specific, targeted interventions and the impact these have on supporting children and young people to achieve.

2.1: SAFEGUARDING

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children and young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 ENSURING WELLBEING, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

satisfactory

This indicator reflects on the school's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- *Wellbeing*
- *Fulfilment of statutory duties*
- *Inclusion and equality*

- Children and young people report that they feel safe when they are at school, and that the school helps them to feel safe. All children and young people feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect. In general, there is a strong sense of community in the school and children and young people present as being happy in classes. Relationships within the school are generally positive and supportive. Staff are aware of potential issues and work hard to ensure that these are avoided where possible to minimise conflict between pupils or between pupils and staff members.
- Staff feel that they are included in the work of the school whilst partners feel valued by the school and supported in their work.
- The staff are working well together to improve outcomes for children and young people. There is evidence that the school engages with children and young people using wellbeing assessments to identify areas of need when children and young people are admitted. However, the school needs to develop the use of wellbeing assessments further to inform IEP targets. This would offer an opportunity to track and assess improvement of wellbeing over time. Wellbeing assessments should also be referenced in the Summary of Initial Assessment. It would be helpful for children and young people to have a child's plan if they do not have a coordinated support plan (CSP).
- The school has recently audited the health and wellbeing aspect of the curriculum. It should now review and update this.
- The school is aware that nurturing principles could be important in bringing more consistency to the overall approach to wellbeing across the school. There are plans to develop a nurturing approach in the school, following training for senior staff.
- The school needs to ensure that it meets the national guidance for the length of the school day and the length of the school week for both the primary and secondary sectors.
- The school should ensure that all children and young people have access to two hours of high quality physical education per week.

- The school should ensure that it meets the statutory requirements for religious and moral education and for religious observance.
- The school works hard to ensure that all children and young people are included, engaged and involved in the life of the school. Staff try to ensure that children and young people's interests are acknowledged and inform their lessons.
- Children and young people have a limited number of subjects available to them through the broad general education. They have insufficient access to curricular areas such as science, social subjects, modern languages and technologies. The school is aware that this is an equality issue for children and has plans to extend the broad general education.
- Young people do not yet have access to sufficient choice within the senior phase of their education. Young people have identified several opportunities that they could not yet access as part of their education. The school needs to develop more flexible pathways for learners to gain accreditation and qualifications within their senior phase.
- The school is developing strategies to raise attainment and achievement for children and young people, including those who come from deprived areas and those who are care experienced. There is a particularly high level of staffing to support children and young people in their learning, which has a positive impact but should be reviewed.
- Children and young people who were previously disengaged from education have responded well to the strategies used by staff to engage them in learning at Aspire. Some children and young people had experienced multiple unsuccessful placements before joining the school. Their attendance has improved at Aspire and they are much more engaged in their learning. Children and young people are not formally excluded from the school, although there are some children and young people who have individual learning programmes which are mostly carried out in other places and are constantly under review.
- The school hosts a café in its foyer which is open to the general public. This provides meals and other refreshments to members of the public and also school dinners for pupils. More could be done to encourage children and young people to eat healthily by providing a wider range of food at mealtimes. Young people can be employed in the restaurant on work placements. Having the restaurant onsite is a helpful way for the school to make links with the local community and to encourage them in to the school. It also helps children and young people to practise their social skills in a real life situation, as there are times when children and young people are in the restaurant at the same time as the general public. The school also has a well-equipped gym which is open to the public outside school hours.

3.2 RAISING ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- *Attainment in literacy and numeracy*
- *Attainment over time*
- *Overall quality of learner's achievement*
- *Equity for all learners*

Raising Attainment and Achievement

- At the time of inspection, there were 18 children and young people at Aspire Education, from the later stages of primary to the final year of secondary school. Overall, most of the children and young people attending Aspire Education are making satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. A few children and young people are making good progress in literacy and English language, and numeracy and mathematics. All children and young people at Aspire Education previously had a history of interrupted schooling, resulting in gaps in their learning impacting on their attainment.

Literacy

- Many younger children and young people are able to read single words and sentences. A few younger children are capable of reading paragraphs and more extended writing. A few children and young people only read with adult support. Older young people are reading short novels and successfully answering comprehension questions.
- A few younger children and young people can write in sentences and paragraphs. A few younger children and young people, and some older young people, require significant adult support to engage with and complete written tasks. Many older young people are capable of extended writing which is neatly presented and well punctuated. They are able to write in a range of ways including persuasive essays, short stories and factual reports. Some are working hard to improve their spelling.
- A few younger children and young people are able to take part in class discussions and to share their ideas with others. They can express their ideas confidently and appropriately. A few younger children and young people are skilled in capturing classmates' ideas and recording them as a mind map. Most older young people are able to discuss their learning with others.

Numeracy

- Almost all children and young people in the primary and early stages of secondary school are working at Curriculum for Excellence levels first to second in numeracy. A few older young people are working at third and fourth level. Younger children and young people are able to carry out money calculations, understand how to use bank cards, and use multiplication, addition, subtraction and division when solving problems. They can apply these skills in a real life context of pricing and comparing shopping purchased from three different supermarkets.

- A few older young people are working on gaps identified in their mathematical knowledge in preparation for completing a National Qualification in numeracy. Others are learning to use probability and prediction and can work out angles using the properties of shapes.

Attainment over time

- Over the last few years, almost all young people in the senior phase attained National Qualification course awards, mainly in literacy, communication, administration and information technology, and numeracy at National 4 or lower. Last year, a few learners attained National 5 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. In addition, the school is beginning to introduce music and photography accredited courses for a few young people. The introduction of a wider range of national courses including National 4 and 5 would impact positively on attainment and provide more choice of progression pathways for senior learners.
- Aspire Education has maintained acceptable levels of attendance for most children and young people taking into account patterns of non-attendance by many of the children and young people at their previous school placements. The rigorous recording of children and young people arriving late for school or returning early to residential units would provide a more accurate record of actual attendance in class.
- All children and young people benefit from personalised literacy and numeracy targets from IEPs. Individual targets are regularly reviewed and assessed to identify areas that require to be consolidated further. The IEPs and other assessment information is stored on a secure digital platform (My Learning Journey) which is accessed by staff in the children and young people's care facilities. This encourages collaborative working across care and education. However, senior staff now need to develop a more rigorous process for collating an overview of attainment over time in all curricular areas. This will better enable teaching staff to identify children and young people requiring early targeted interventions to help them progress with their learning.
- From data provided by the school, most young people in the senior years attend college or gain online qualifications for a range of courses, including first aid and play development and learning. Young people would benefit from more effective planning to ensure that their needs are being met by the college courses they undertake. Young people value opportunities to develop skills for young adulthood through work placements including the Galaxy Café and Aspire's community gym.

Overall Quality of Learners' Achievement

- The school places importance on celebrating children's and young people's achievements at the 'celebration of success' assembly on Fridays. Staff regularly discuss individual learners' achievements when eating together with children and young people at lunchtime.
- Children and young people benefit from participating in a wide range of sports and other clubs including football, fishing and cadets. Several clubs are led by care staff helping to build relationships and trust with participants. Children and young people attending structured uniformed and football clubs learn regulation and resilience, and develop positive identification with peer groups outwith school.

- Children and young people gain accreditation for a range of achievements taking into account the context of the school. Commendably, ten young people achieved the discovery level of the John Muir Trust outdoor award with a few now working towards the next level. Volunteering in the school's café and gym or with Malcolm Sergeant's hospice provides opportunities for those working towards Dynamic Youth and Saltire Awards. Young people told HM Inspectors they enjoy working with the community. Care and education staff now have an opportunity to identify the skills children and young people are developing in each award programme or work placement. The more targeted use of the accredited award programmes in the senior phase would provide more opportunities for personalised progressive pathways into work or further study. The school should now consider an overall rationale and strategy for the senior phase including opportunities for wider achievement.
- Most children and young people demonstrate their respect and sense of responsibility for the wider community in a variety of fund raising events. Young people recently walked the long distance 'Kiltwalk' to raise money for Malcolm Sergeant's children's hospice. As a result, most children and young people have developed a well attuned empathy for the needs of children afflicted by disease or other difficulties.

Equity

- Commendably, from the school's data over the last few years of the ten school leavers, most are living independently and either working or attending college. The school in partnership with Skills Development Scotland could track and monitor destinations for school leavers more closely to provide intelligence on effective post-school transitions.

QI 2.7 PARTNERSHIPS

- *The development and promotion of partnerships*
- *Collaborative learning and improvement*
- *Impact on learners*

- Feedback from partners demonstrates strong relationships are emerging and beginning to have an impact upon learners. The partners value the school, the staff and the children and share the values for meeting the needs of children and young people effectively. The partners identified that they are welcomed into the school community which has a positive impact upon the children and young people's relationships with them.
- The school should develop more robust partnership agreements to ensure ongoing and predictable opportunities for all learners. Opportunities should be created for partners to be involved in planning and to collaborate more frequently when designing learning experiences for the children and young people. Partners would benefit from more awareness of pupil profiles to ensure they can more effectively meet the needs of children and young people.
- Local authority partners who have children and young people placed at the school appreciate the high level of feedback they get from the school and the residential units. They also appreciate the school's willingness to communicate with parents and find that staff are open to suggestions. They feel that education staff, care staff and management all work well together and put achievable targets in place for children and young people so that they can make progress. They can see that children and young people attend school more frequently once they have been placed in Aspire.
- Partners who have children and young people placed at the school think that staff at Aspire are particularly skilled at helping children and young people to make transitions and will ensure that they are not carried out too quickly.
- School staff have developed strong and trusting relationships with parents and care staff in the residential units. The relationships are built on mutual trust and respect and are valued by parents and care staff alike. Parents told HM Inspectors they are contacted regularly by senior staff in the school and kept updated on their child's progress. Parents spoke of staff being "passionate" about the children's and young people's wellbeing. Parents find staff to be approachable and know they are welcome at the school.
- Parents spoke positively about the progress their children were making in their ability to self-regulate their own behaviours and interact with other peers appropriately. Parents and care staff are fully involved in the reviewing of individual targets in the IEPs and believe their views and concerns are valued by staff.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.