

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 17 March 2022

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Education Scotland visit to Riverbrae School and ELCC

1. Summary

- 1.1 Riverbrae School and ELCC was inspected by Education Scotland in January 2019. Inspection findings indicated that the school and ELCC needed additional support and more time to make necessary improvements.
- 1.2 Education Scotland indicated in their letter to parents after the 2019 inspection that they would further engage with the school to report on progress. They engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Riverbrae School and ELCC in December 2021.
- 1.3 The letter to parents following this visit, published by Education Scotland in March 2022 is attached as an appendix to this report. The letter is also available from the director of children's services or from the Education Scotland website: <https://education.gov.scot/>.
- 1.4 The focus of the engagement visit was to help inspectors learn more about how children and their families had been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. They also wanted to hear about approaches that had been working well to support children's and young people's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. They discussed with the headteacher and local authority officers the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from the 2019 inspection.
- 1.5 In their letter, Education Scotland commented on the support that children and young people at Riverbrae had received during the Covid -19 pandemic. They also reported positively on the progress that had been achieved by the

school towards the recommendations from the previous inspection. The letter summarises this progress including the following key points:

- The headteacher has been successful in creating a positive, caring culture at Riverbrae School. Senior leaders are encouraging staff to take on leadership roles. An increasing number of staff are taking on additional responsibilities well;
- Despite the challenges of the pandemic, new approaches to tracking and monitoring have been adopted well by staff and the curriculum is developing effectively;
- Teachers and practitioners are planning learning at the broad general education and senior phase more effectively;
- At the senior phase, young people now follow bespoke individualised learning programmes incorporating a mixture of National Qualifications and personal achievement awards;
- Senior leaders and practitioners in the nursery have compiled new and improved processes to assess, track, plan and monitor children's progress more effectively ; and
- During the pandemic, nominated staff across the school and nursery took a lead role in developing the curriculum successfully. The new approaches are ambitious and meet better the needs and interests of learners.

- 1.6 Inspectors recognised the impact of Covid-19 on the ability of the school and ELCC to fully realise improvements on the areas identified at the last inspection. Recognising the progress made however, they have asked the local authority to submit a report on continued progress within one year of the publication of the letter. They have indicated that they will work together with local authority officers following submission of the report regarding what happens next.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to note the positive progress in Riverbrae school and ELCC as noted in the Education Scotland letter of 1 March 2022.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Education Scotland's letters to parents are published online by Education Scotland.
- 3.2 Riverbrae school and nursery opened in August 2017. It is a purpose built facility provided by Renfrewshire Council for children with complex additional support needs.

- 3.3 An Education Scotland inspection of Riverbrae school and ELCC took place in 2019. The four recommendations for improvement were as follows:
- Strengthen the leadership of the school and nursery to increase the pace of change. The senior leadership team need to provide clear direction for school and nursery improvement. In doing so, more leadership opportunities should be provided for children, young people and staff.
 - Improve approaches to the assessment, tracking and monitoring of children's and young people's progress. Ensure there are clear processes in place which are used effectively by all staff so that children and young people can better achieve their full potential.
 - Develop the curriculum across the school and nursery, taking due account of national guidance and expectations. In so doing, ensure that the curriculum enables children and young people to make sustained progress.
 - Raise attainment and achievement across the school and nursery through increased expectations of what children and young people can achieve#
- 3.6 Education Scotland planned to return to carry out a further inspection within one year of publication of the 2019 letter to parents. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, inspections were paused however towards the end of 2021 Education Scotland planned a series of engagement visits with schools due to be inspected, recognising the recovery context all schools were working within.
- 3.7 The visit to Riverbrae school and ELCC took place on 8/9 December 2021. The visit was a positive experience for all involved. Inspectors met with a range of stakeholders, and professional dialogue took place between staff, inspectors and local authority officers.
- 3.8 Notable improvements regarding the four recommendations from the previous inspection were highlighted and it has been acknowledged that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the school has made significant progress.
- 3.7 Children's services welcome the process of audit undertaken by Education Scotland as supportive to continuous improvement in Renfrewshire education establishments. The inspection report will be used by the school and the service in the context of supporting and developing the quality of educational provision.
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial:** None
2. **HR & Organisational Development:** None

3. **Community/Council Planning –**

- Our Renfrewshire is thriving: high standards of education provision ensure that children and young people are given the best start in life so that they promote and contribute to a more prosperous, fairer society.
- Our Renfrewshire is well – by providing an environment which encourages care, welfare and development, establishments play a crucial role in developing children and young people so that they become responsible citizens. The establishment's success in promoting wellbeing is evaluated as part of the inspection process.

4. **Legal:** None

5. **Property:** None

6. **Information Technology:** None

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety:** None

9. **Procurement:** None

10. **Risk:** None

11. **Privacy Impact:** None

12. **Cosla Policy Position:** Not applicable

13. **Climate Risk -** None

List of Background Papers

None

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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 Riverbrae School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority and carried out a visit to Riverbrae School. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families, have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches that have been working well to support children's and young people's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officers 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

Throughout the lockdowns, staff responded positively by offering online learning to all learners. Less than half of children and young people physically attended the school on part-time rotational places. This rotation helped school staff manage physical distancing requirements more effectively. Staff were able to provide targeted support for individual children and young people. They held regular virtual assemblies, which were popular with learners and their families and helped combat social isolation.

Staff understood the importance of supporting children and families during lockdown. They delivered care packages, undertook wellbeing visits and provided specialist resources for learning. They regularly went beyond the parameters of their usual role to help the wellbeing of the school community. For example, they established a walking group to support parents and carers. Senior leaders also made appropriate referrals to a counselling service that supported the wellbeing of children and young people experiencing loss and anxiety.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The headteacher has been successful in creating a positive, caring culture at Riverbrae School. She promotes the vision and values of the school and nursery well. Ably supported by her senior leadership team, the headteacher has installed a greater sense of direction for school improvement. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, new approaches to tracking and monitoring have been adopted well by staff and the curriculum is developing effectively. Children's and young people's progress and attainment are improving. Senior leaders now need to ensure that continuous improvement is embedded further across the school and nursery leading to improved outcomes for all children and young people.

Senior leaders are encouraging staff to take on leadership roles. An increasing number of staff are taking on additional responsibilities well. They are leading and contributing effectively to areas of school improvement including children's rights and health and wellbeing. A minority of children and young people have additional responsibilities in the

school. They participate well in pupil councils and take on leadership roles in classrooms, across the school and occasionally in the local community. Senior leaders and staff should now identify creative ways for more children and young people to take on leadership roles.

Senior leaders in the nursery now have clearly defined remits and leadership responsibilities. Practitioners in the nursery take on leadership roles well such as completing the wellbeing information for 'team around the child' meetings. Staff now need to look at developing imaginative ways for children to take on leadership roles in the nursery.

Teachers and practitioners are planning learning at the broad general education and senior phase more effectively. They are using personalised planning approaches well to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people. Whilst planning learning, teachers and practitioners are taking better account of learners' interests and aspirations. At the senior phase, young people now follow bespoke individualised learning programmes incorporating a mixture of National Qualifications and personal achievement awards. Staff now need to streamline their tracking and monitoring approaches. They should focus on recording information which measures progress well and influences future learning.

Senior leaders and practitioners in the nursery have compiled new and improved processes to assess, track, plan and monitor children's progress more effectively. Each child now has a learning and development overview of their progress which teachers update at regular intervals. Senior leaders and practitioners need to ensure these processes are completed timeously for all children and continue to be reviewed regularly.

During the pandemic, nominated staff across the school and nursery took a lead role in developing the curriculum successfully. The new approaches are ambitious and meet better the needs and interests of learners. These developments took place across a variety of curriculum areas including expressive arts and mathematics. Staff in the nursery have improved successfully the learning environment to encourage children to make choices in their play and freely go between the two playrooms. They now need to improve the quality of the outdoor spaces and develop more outdoor learning activities. Staff in the nursery should also continue to reflect on how the curriculum could be developed to meet better children's needs. This should include an increased focus on health and wellbeing, communication, numeracy and mathematics.

Young people at the senior phase are achieving an increasing number and range of National Qualifications (NQ) and personal achievement awards. This has supported all school leavers in June 2021 to move on successfully into further education, training or a job. Senior leaders have put in place aspirational plans to improve attainment and achievement across the school and nursery. They now need to continue to raise expectations of what learners can achieve and to embed further individualised planning approaches. Teachers and practitioners would benefit greatly from increased scrutiny of their learning and teaching approaches.

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, notably raising children's and young people's attainment and achievement. We have asked Renfrewshire Council to provide us with further information about the school's progress within one year of the publication of the letter. We will work together with local authority officers to agree what will happen next. Should we require another visit to the school, we will inform parents/carers. Otherwise, Renfrewshire Council 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.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector