

13 February 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2023, HM Inspectors published a letter on Rephad Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the headteacher and Dumfries and Galloway Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school and nursery class 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 and nursery class 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 and nursery class 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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

**Improve leadership of the nursery and in doing so ensure senior leaders and staff more fully understand their roles and responsibilities and review current policies and procedures.**

Senior leaders have developed a stronger understanding of their roles in leading and managing the nursery team. The headteacher has increased the amount of time she has spent in the nursery working with staff and children. This has helped her to develop a better understanding of how the nursery operates on a daily basis. The local authority has helped the headteacher to establish clear roles and remits for the headteacher, depute headteacher and nursery manager. This includes key responsibilities and steps each member of the team should take to support improvement. The headteacher now needs to build on this to help all staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities as part of the team. Practitioners would welcome increased opportunities to lead and manage change and improvement in the nursery.

The local authority has supported the headteacher to improve leadership within the nursery. An additional nursery manager and early years support officer have provided support through a coaching and mentoring role. The local authority should continue to support senior leaders to develop their skills in leading and managing change. Senior leaders need to build their knowledge of national expectations and guidance on early learning and childcare. Overall, there has not yet been sufficient progress made towards addressing this area for improvement. Working together, senior leaders and the local authority now need to accelerate progress in this area.

**Together, senior leaders and staff should develop how they gather information on how well the nursery is doing. It will be helpful to have clearer priorities and to check that changes are leading to improvements for children.**

The headteacher and nursery manager have worked with local authority staff to create a structured approach to gathering information about what is working well in the nursery, and what needs to improve. However, senior leaders are not yet undertaking the full range of

activities they have planned. They need to take this forward at pace to help them improve the quality of children's experiences.

Senior leaders have taken a few positive steps to involve practitioners in identifying ways to improve the nursery. This work is at the very early stages. Moving forward it will be important to ensure that all staff are more fully involved in taking forward and reviewing the impact of improvements. The headteacher and nursery manager need to more routinely observe practice and review planning and observations to help them provide all staff with feedback on how to improve children's experiences.

The nursery manager has made a few changes in the nursery. This includes the layout of the playrooms, adapted mealtime routines and the introduction of small group times. These changes are helping children to be more independent and provide opportunities for staff to develop children's confidence and social skills. Senior leaders should continue to check that the changes they make improve children experiences and help all children to make the best possible progress.

There has not yet been sufficient progress made towards addressing this area for improvement. The headteacher should work with the nursery manager and practitioners to agree a simple and well understood improvement plan.

### **Improve the quality of learning experiences for children in the nursery ensuring these build on prior learning and support their wellbeing.**

Most children experience nurturing and positive relationships with adults. Children are happy and settle quickly into the nursery routines. Practitioners now document children's engagement in activities more regularly using floor books. Personal learning plans are now more accessible for children within the nursery. Children enjoy sharing their plans with adults in the nursery to revisit and reflect on their experiences. Overall, practitioners have improved the quality and frequency of observations. Practitioners' observations are beginning to show more evidence of children's learning. This is at the early stages of helping them to better plan learning experiences that build on children's prior learning. Senior leaders should now support staff to improve these observations further to include more specific comments on children's progress in learning and their next steps.

Nursery managers and practitioners are at the early stages of developing their approaches to planning and checking children's progress in learning. They should make use of local authority and national guidance to help them make more accurate judgements on children's progress. Practitioners should engage in professional learning, including national practice guidance, to help develop their knowledge and understanding of the role of the adult in supporting learning for children aged two to three and for those who are over three.

Overall, there has been some progress towards addressing this area for improvement. Senior leaders should continue to work with staff to improve further the quality of learning experiences for all children.

**Across the school and nursery, senior leaders and staff should develop further approaches to planning and assessing progress for children who require additional support with their learning and wellbeing. This should include working closely with parents and children.**

Senior leaders and nursery managers have taken steps to improve approaches to supporting children who require additional support with their wellbeing and learning. This includes the creation of an overview of the available supports and interventions for children. All staff should now use this overview to plan appropriate supports for children who require additional support with their learning across the school and nursery.

The headteacher and depute headteacher are aware that they now need to involve children and parents more fully in meetings to plan and review additional support. Parents would like more information about the supports in place to help their children make the best possible progress in their learning.

Nursery staff have reviewed children's personal and individual educational plans. Most children's plans contain helpful information about children's strengths, interests and any barriers to learning and wellbeing. Most plans include a small number of support strategies. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that all practitioners are clear about the strategies in place and use them more consistently. This should ensure that all children receiving additional support make the best possible progress in their development and learning.

Overall, there has been some progress towards addressing this area for improvement. Senior leaders need to build on this positive start to ensure all children receive appropriate and timely support. There remains a need to involve children and parents more fully planning and evaluating additional support.

**The headteacher and primary staff should develop further the curriculum and link this more closely to the local area and community. This should be in partnership with children and parents and include support for teachers' planning and assessment.**

Teachers continue to work effectively with a range of partners to enhance the curriculum. Children have regular opportunities to engage in learning in their local community. They lead fundraising activities, learn about local historical events and access the local beach and forest for outdoor learning. Children are developing a strong understanding of their local area and their role as responsible members of their community. Teachers should build on this positive approach and develop further their partnership with parents in developing the curriculum.

Teachers have strengthened approaches to planning and assessment across the curriculum. They plan together to ensure learning builds effectively on what children already know. Children's own interests are increasingly influencing the curriculum as teachers plan relevant and meaningful contexts for learning. Children are developing a strong understanding of their local area and their role as responsible members of their community.

Overall, strong progress has been made towards addressing this area for improvement.

### What happens next?

The school has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Dumfries and Galloway Council regarding the nursery class and school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within 12 months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Dumfries and Galloway Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the nursery class and school we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Marion Carlton  
HM Inspector