

18 January 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 Calderbridge Primary School and Nursery Class, 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 the school and nursery class. 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 health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officers, the school's and nursery class's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection. As a result of new delivery models and staffing changes, the nursery team has expanded since the last inspection. There have also been several changes to staffing at the primary stages.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

### **Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19**

The headteacher, together with practitioners and staff, ensured that children's health and wellbeing remained central to their engagement with each other, learners and families throughout lockdown and periods of remote learning. Together with the deputy headteacher, she also supported nursery practitioners, teachers and support staff take forward areas identified from our previous visit as in need of improvement. Prior to COVID-19, the headteacher had already established productive relationships with parents. This provided a firm basis from which to build during COVID-19 challenges. As a result, practitioners, teachers and support staff responded quickly to worries and concerns. They used a range of strategies to maintain contact with children and families. Practitioners and staff working at the primary stages, welcomed assistance given from local authority officers, particularly in using digital technologies. This enabled them to continue to deliver relevant learning experiences to children when they were unable to attend due to restrictions.

Parents and staff spoke highly of the trust they had in the headteacher's strong leadership and direction which helped steer the school through lockdowns and periods of remote learning. Nursery practitioners valued the deputy headteacher's guidance. Across the nursery and primary stages, children have been well supported when unable to attend in-school learning. Teachers gave children interesting activities which continued as they learned from home. Children were given school devices where needed. This enabled them to have regular contact with their teachers. In addition, children accessed practical materials when this was needed. Parents were pleased that they received overviews of what children's learning would look like over the course of the day and week. Staff reported that they worked well together as a team. They shared ideas and suggestions to help them deliver interesting experiences to motivate children when in school. Practitioners, teachers and support staff also valued the pastoral support which was provided from the headteacher, deputy headteacher as well as from each other. They felt that this strong support was vital in helping

the health and wellbeing of children, families, staff and others who faced considerable challenges during COVID-19.

When children returned to the nursery class and in-school learning, all staff responded well to children's varying needs. The headteacher has worked hard to promote a 'school of happiness' where children are nurtured. Teachers and support staff are using a range of well-judged interventions which are helping children to make progress. They are working well together to help address any gaps in children's learning which have arisen as a result of COVID-19. Children liked being back in school, learning outdoors and being with friends. They enjoyed learning in a range of curricular areas. They know what to do to keep themselves safe and protected from harm. Together with all staff, the headteacher has developed various tracking systems which helped her to review and take action to support children's progress.

### **Progress with recommendations from previous inspection**

The headteacher has provided strong leadership. Senior leaders and staff who enjoy taking on lead roles, have secured school improvements which have greatly enhanced children's learning and the quality of teaching. Across the school, practitioners, teachers and support staff are more consistent in their approaches. Practitioners in the nursery identify children promptly who need additional support and work well with parents and other agencies to provide this. They now need to continue to develop their skills in questioning to further children's learning. The nursery team recognise rightly that a few children need more opportunities to apply, link and develop further their skills and interests. Older children enjoy navigating the journey to, and the interesting experiences of, the forest school. Children would benefit from taking increased responsibility within the playroom and outdoors. As planned, the team should continue to work together to provide learning that is suitably challenging for all children.

Across the primary stages, teachers have improved how they plan and organise lessons which are now better paced to meet children's needs. They are more confident in using assessment information to identify children's strengths and in planning next steps for their learning. Support for learning staff deliver key strategies which are helping children to progress in line with their own stage of development. Nurture is a central part of the school's arrangements to help children achieve. Across the school, staff use approaches which allow children to know they are valued. Children are better behaved as a result of these improvements. They have greater respect for each other and for adults. Children enjoy leading aspects of their learning, are motivated and like when their interests inform teachers' planning. Children are proud of the school and their own achievements.

The school's curricular offer now takes more account of national guidance and reflects its own context and the local community. As a result, children are developing a broader range of relevant skills and acquiring more knowledge in various curricular areas. More children are progressing in line with their own stage of development and expected Curriculum for Excellence level. Consistency in learning and teaching, appropriate support for learning and nurturing arrangements have all had a positive impact on children developing key skills for learning and life. The headteacher recognises that there is scope to develop further these approaches to reflect continually on children's varying needs and guarantee their progress.

The headteacher has established useful systems to track progress and now has a clear overview of school performance. The headteacher and depute headteacher continue to play an active part in leading, monitoring and supporting improvements in the nursery. The depute headteacher and senior practitioner work well together as a result of improved deployment of staff. They continue rightly, to provide support to practitioners as they review the impact of their work for children. The team, working with the principal teacher, should continue to use national practice guidance to strengthen and develop further their shared pedagogy across the early level to help support children make suitable progress.

Despite COVID-19, the headteacher has used information gathered from various systems to help teachers and support staff develop a clear understanding of children's attainment and achievement. Well-judged interventions for identified individuals and groups of children are having a positive impact on helping them to make suitable progress. The school's information shows that despite lockdowns and remote learning, children are attaining better in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher's high quality leadership and direction, her regular and relevant feedback to teachers and staff on the quality of their teaching and children's learning have all contributed effectively to children achieving and attaining more. In addition, the school is more nurturing and children receive support when and where they need it. Parents are now much better involved in their children's education and feel more part of the school community. The headteacher recognises that further work is needed to maintain the improvements. Tracking and monitoring systems need to continue to signpost children's strengths but also show what they need to achieve next. Staff recognise that they need to continue to build on and sustain improvements made. It is important that all staff and practitioners, including those who are new to the school and nursery class continue to implement agreed policies for teaching and learning. It is important to help ensure that children continue to receive a strong curricular offer which guides their work and helps them to achieve.

### What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, staff have worked hard and been effective in implementing plans to support recovery. The headteacher's clear vision and support for practitioners, teachers, support staff, children and families at the school have contributed significantly to improvements and much better outcomes for learners. Recommendations from the original inspection have been well met. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection. North Lanarkshire 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.

Moirá Allan  
HM Inspector