

21 June 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 Pentland 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 Pentland 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 health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed with the headteacher and local authority officer 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 and families through COVID-19

Throughout the lockdown periods, staff responded positively by offering online learning to all learners. This included twice daily live lessons which were well attended by the majority of children. Most learning activities focused on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. By the second lockdown, almost all children physically attended the school on a rota basis. Staff re-established positive relationships with children well.

Staff have a strong focus on the wellbeing of learners and maintained close contact with children and families throughout the pandemic. They made considerable efforts to carry out regular doorstep visits to check on children's health and wellbeing. During these visits, staff delivered resource packs to support children with their learning at home. Senior leaders made weekly telephone calls to parents to provide support and signpost them to other agencies.

All learners have been negatively affected by the pandemic, with almost all children having gaps in their learning as a result. Staff have a detailed understanding of the needs of individual learners and how COVID-19 has affected them. Teachers assess changing learning needs comprehensively. They are adopting new teaching approaches well to engage children with their learning. Most children are progressing successfully with their personal targets in writing and numeracy.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The headteacher has been successful in creating a positive, caring culture at Pentland School. She promotes the vision and values of the school effectively. Teachers and additional support needs assistants (ASNAs) have nurturing relationships with children. They use praise well to reinforce positive relationships related to the school's shared values. Children speak about the school values well and demonstrate respect in their interactions with others. They understand the importance of being kind to others.

Staff have improved their approaches to support better children when they are distressed, angry or upset. They are using a wider range of de-escalation techniques productively. All

children have individual strategies to follow which support them effectively to regulate their emotions. This includes taking time out from a challenging situation or using breathing techniques to calm down. The number of exclusions at the school has fallen sharply. Physical intervention and seclusion are now seen as a last resort and are rarely used.

Across the school, children are accessing a broader curriculum with increased opportunities for physical education, technology and expressive arts. The depute headteacher has introduced a well-structured three year curriculum plan. This is helping to ensure that each child is following a more progressive learning pathway.

Senior leaders are encouraging staff to take on leadership roles well. Most staff are taking on additional responsibilities. They are leading and contributing effectively to areas of curriculum improvement including learning outdoors and the use of digital technology. Principal teachers are leading on literacy and numeracy and are taking this forward very well. They have supported teachers to introduce new learning and teaching approaches, and monitor learners' progress effectively. Children would benefit from more opportunities to take on leadership roles and participate more fully in curriculum development.

Staff have communicated effectively with children and families to alleviate any fears or apprehension about the upcoming relocation of the school. Most children are excited by the move, particularly the enhanced opportunities available at the new school for physical education and learning outdoors. Senior leaders and staff should now continue to support children to move successfully into the new school environment. Supported by local authority colleagues, it is imperative that staff continue to develop the strategies that have met learners' needs well. This includes smaller class sizes, welcoming breakout areas and strong teamwork between teachers and ASNAs.

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 addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. 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.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector