

1 February 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 Our Lady and St Francis' 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 Our Lady and St Francis' Primary 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 acting headteacher, staff 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 and families through COVID-19

The acting headteacher, senior leaders and staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that children and families have been supported well throughout the pandemic. They provided targeted, one-to-one support wherever necessary, that helped all children engage in learning at home. Staff made home visits, phone calls and held video meetings to help children feel connected to their school and nursery. Teachers and practitioners worked closely with specialist staff and partners to support individual families. During periods of remote learning, senior leaders checked on the quality of children's learning and the progress they were making. This helped staff to plan for children's next steps when they returned to school buildings.

Staff have worked together well to develop new ways of learning and teaching. Children and staff have embraced the use of digital technology and social media to celebrate children's achievements and to share their successes with families. The staff team have developed creative ways to overcome challenges and barriers presented by COVID-19. A good example of practitioners' solution-focused approach has been the introduction of 'Family Fridays'. Each Friday, staff in the nursery plan a range of motivating outdoor learning activities for children. They carefully organise these activities so that parents can safely come and observe their child at play outdoors, and chat with staff, before collecting their child. This has helped to maintain good communication and a sense of partnership between the nursery and families.

Senior leaders are rightly very proud of children and the staff team, and how they have adapted well through challenging times.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The acting headteacher provides very effective leadership and direction to staff. She has introduced a variety of new approaches to check on the quality of children's experiences in the nursery class. The nursery team now have protected time to meet and reflect together on

their practice. Practitioners very much appreciate the encouragement from senior leaders that enables them to undertake training and qualifications. As a result, practitioners feel very well supported. They are now better able to identify what is going well in the nursery and what they need to do to improve further. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, staff have worked very hard to continue to improve the work of the school and nursery class. Led very effectively by the acting headteacher, they have made very good progress in each of the areas for improvement identified at the original inspection.

The nursery team have made important improvements to the way they assess the progress children are making. They have introduced helpful ways to record their observations of children and to plan next steps in learning. Each child has their own 'wee book' that celebrates very well their milestones and achievements. The nursery team should continue with plans to develop further their skills in questioning.

Practitioners have involved children in improving the indoor and outdoor play areas. Children thrive in the welcoming and inviting nursery environment that has ample space and resources for them to develop their own ideas. Children are now more meaningfully involved in the planning of learning. This means that their experiences are interesting and motivating. Most children can engage well in their play for extended periods.

The acting headteacher has led a successful process to refresh the vision, values and aims of the nursery class. She has involved children, parents and staff at all stages of this valuable work. The new values reflect the warm ethos of the nursery, as a nurturing learning environment where children are happy and safe.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

Lesley A Allan
HM Inspector