

8 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 Calderbank 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 Calderbank 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 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, young people and families through COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a number of challenges to Calderbank Primary School and Nursery Class. The number of children attending school has varied since the school reopened after periods of closure. One of the reasons for children's varied attendance was the high levels of anxiety around COVID-19 which are still being felt in the school community. The headteacher noted that staff absence had not impacted on class cover due to additional staffing provided by the local authority. Commendably, the school improvement agenda has not been significantly impacted by staff absence. The school is well supported by the local authority and the headteacher and staff maintain close contact with all partner agencies to assist individual children and families.

The headteacher and staff continue to develop a number of new and creative ways to support children's learning, for example, in digital skills. Learning from the period of remote learning during school closures, children and parents have now further developed their digital skills to enable them to access learning experiences and activities online with confidence. As a result of survey work undertaken, parents and children who required additional help were supported through direct contact with school staff.

The headteacher and staff have a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing for all children, and assess and address any gaps in learning. Teaching staff have developed new and creative approaches to providing learning opportunities to support individual learning needs. For example, all children from Primary 4 to Primary 7 have had access to additional music tuition and Primary 7 children made a successful field trip visit to support their health and wellbeing. Children participate in the Active Schools programme and all children participate in the 'making-a-difference' pupil voice groups. Both activities further support the development of positive health and wellbeing approaches across the school. The headteacher and staff respond well to individual needs, anxieties and concerns which children may display. Staff use nurturing approaches well to support those children who show signs of anxiety attending school. Counselling services offered by a third sector partner also provide effective and supportive strategies for children who require them.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The headteacher provides a clear, strategic lead for school self-evaluation. Along with staff, the headteacher now evaluates their practice making good use of the quality indicators in 'How Good is our School? 4' on a regular basis. The headteacher now carries out a systematic approach to ensuring quality and consistency in learning, including observing learning in classrooms and sampling children's work. This approach also includes discussing with all staff children who may need an individual approach to learning to support their progress. This supports the headteacher to monitor and challenge the pace of improvement across the school at appropriate intervals.

The school improvement plan is shared with all stakeholders. School priorities are shared with staff, children and parents. In particular, time is spent gathering views and feedback from all parents about how these improvements are supporting children. For example, recent survey work around digital skills development has been very helpful in planning improvements to support the way children and parents were working together to make full use of the online digital learning activities.

To improve the quality and consistency of children's learning experiences, staff now present a well-planned and creative curriculum for children, particularly in digital technology skills and in health and wellbeing. Staff have refreshed the literacy curriculum and this has resulted in significant improvement in the quality and consistency of written work. They have recently been working with the local authority pedagogy team and Education Scotland to develop learning approaches which inspire and enthuse the children. Staff now make appropriate use of the local authority curriculum pathways in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These are adapted well to match the context of the school and the individual needs of the children. These pathways take account of the National Benchmarks and staff are confident in using the pathways to support their planning. Staff are now embedding interdisciplinary learning across the curriculum and developing their approaches to developing appropriate skills.

The pace of learning for most children has increased and expectations across the school in attainment have been raised. Teachers have been developing further awareness of the features of a good lesson and working together to incorporate this learning into their daily practice. Teachers give children consistent feedback to support learning. This has a strong focus on children's next steps. Children talk about their own learning with confidence. They are aware of the reasons to learn in curricular areas and can discuss what success in their learning will look like. There is a whole school approach to developing higher order thinking skills which is helping higher achieving children to attain further.

Staff use a range of interventions and support for individuals across the school to improve learning. Enhanced transition arrangements across all stages are also helping to support children. Staff plan together using a consistent, appropriate and agreed format. Staff share these plans with the headteacher and discuss children's progress at regular intervals during the school session. These plans are linked to the National Benchmarks. Tracking and monitoring systems across the school are now more thorough and robust. An online record is maintained for each child and provides a detailed overview of individual children's progress. The headteacher and staff gather and record information on children's attainment to evaluate progress of children across the school. A range of assessments and check-ups is used by

teachers to evaluate children's progress. Children's achievements are tracked and monitored to ensure equity of access to opportunities at school. Teachers have undertaken moderation activities working collegiately with their associated schools and the local authority pedagogy team. Staff are working well to have a clear understanding of curriculum for excellence levels and national standards.

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 and 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.

James McCrory
HM Inspector