

21 January 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2018, HM Inspectors published a letter on Our Lady and St Francis Primary School Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement, which we agreed with the school and North Lanarkshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the nursery class again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting headteacher and other staff about the steps the 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 nursery class has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Strengthen approaches to self-evaluation and the monitoring, tracking and analysis of data across the school and nursery. Use these to inform appropriate interventions and priorities for improvement at a whole school level to ensure better outcomes for children.

There has been insufficient progress in addressing this area for improvement.

Since the original inspection, practitioners in the nursery have begun to increase their use of national guidance to help them make improvements. Practitioners now meet more regularly to reflect on what has gone well and to identify any areas needing improved further. This enables them to support new initiatives, such as the development of a two to five year playroom structure, more effectively. Further work is required to ensure that these meetings lead to improved experiences and outcomes for all children.

Practitioners are at the very early stages of engaging with national guidance to support how they measure the effectiveness of the nursery. Senior leaders recognise the need for more regular and focused use of this to support improvement. Greater direction by senior leaders is required to ensure planned professional learning time is provided. This will support practitioners to make changes and monitor how effective these have been for children.

Significant work remains to be done to monitor and track the work of the nursery. A programme of formal monitoring has been introduced but has yet to be fully established. The leadership team should develop more effective tracking of children's progress in learning taking greater account of national guidance. The monitoring of the work of the nursery needs to have more emphasis on the impact of changes made and next steps to be taken. By so doing, the effectiveness of interventions, and the pace of change, can be increased.

Overall, progress in relation to strengthening approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the nursery, and tracking children's progress, is very limited. To address this, the acting headteacher should support practitioners to review the school's current improvement priorities in light of this inspection report.

Senior leaders should give clearer leadership and direction to the nursery. Increase the pace of change in the nursery.

Staffing issues have had a significant impact on the progress made in this area for improvement.

From the beginning of 2019 the depute headteacher took a more active and visible role in leading change across the nursery. However, since August, the role of the depute headteacher extended to include acting headteacher. The acting headteacher has had no depute headteacher since the summer. This is adversely affecting the pace of change in the nursery. The nursery continues to require clearer leadership and direction to increase the pace of change. Greater clarity about leadership roles and responsibilities will support practitioners better to increase the pace of change. North Lanarkshire Council has committed to supporting the school and nursery staffing arrangements.

Practitioners have worked well with staff from a neighbouring nursery and the acting headteacher to improve the learning environment and the outdoor area. They have made an early start to making the nursery less adult led. Children's interests are being incorporated more in children's learning. Practitioners are well placed to develop the use of the learning environment further. An online tool to chart children's progress has been introduced. This is at a very early stage of development. Its use should be developed further to ensure children's progress in learning is captured and used more effectively to inform planning.

Significant staff absence meant the lack of involvement of practitioners in the improvement journey. This has hindered the pace of change. All members of the nursery team need to be much more involved in the change process to ensure they have greater ownership and understanding of improvements. The acting headteacher should continue to develop practitioner's understanding by leading ongoing professional learning specific to the nursery and individual needs.

Continue to develop staff confidence in assessing children's progress through robust assessment and moderation activities in line with national guidance to raise attainment.

There has been very limited progress towards achieving this area for improvement.

Nursery practitioners have benefitted from visits to other nurseries to share practice. Practitioners meet more regularly to discuss children's progress and planning of learning. Their knowledge of all children across the nursery has improved as a result. This is beginning to meet the needs of a few children. Initial training and guidance in relation to how staff assess children through observation of learning has been provided. Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure this is ongoing and used well across the nursery.

Practitioners are at the very early stages of being able to assess confidently children's progress in relation to National Benchmarks. They should work more closely with primary staff to ensure children can build on their learning as they move from nursery to P1. Practitioners should now be provided with opportunities to work with colleagues in other nurseries and P1 classes. This would support them in developing an understanding of the standards expected across the early level.

In the nursery, leaders and practitioners need to review and develop the learning environment to ensure it provides sufficient opportunities for well-planned, purposeful play.

There has been good progress in improving the learning environment.

The nursery has taken positive action to improve the learning environment. With support from staff from a neighbouring nursery, the indoor and outdoor learning environments have improved significantly. Arrangements for children to access outdoor clothing and the outdoors has improved considerably. Children find outdoor learning stimulating and fun. Children have more ready access to resources that encourage investigative, explorative and imaginative play. The more effective use of space across the nursery provides greater choice in where children want to play. The inclusion of cosy areas gives children space to be alone and manage their emotions. This has helped provide a calmer indoor environment. Arrangements for snack have improved and snack time is a more positive experience for children.

Now that the environment has improved, a greater focus on learning and progression across the nursery is required. Practitioners should be supported to understand how this new environment could be used to improve outcomes for children. Although opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy across the nursery have improved, there is scope to develop this much more across all areas of play.

Although children with additional support needs are more engaged in the current learning environment, much work needs done to meet their learning needs. The leadership team should support practitioners to develop strategies to meet children's needs more effectively. Planning for children with additional support needs should be improved.

Overall, there is a good relationship between parents and staff in the nursery. To help provide parents with time to speak to staff in the nursery we ask that staff review approaches to communicating with parents and carers at the start of nursery sessions.

What happens next?

The nursery class has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with North Lanarkshire Council regarding the nursery class's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the nursery class within nine months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with North Lanarkshire Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the nursery class, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the nursery class has made.

Pamela Adamson
HM Inspector