

21 December 2021

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 St Mark's Primary School and nursery class, Rutherglen, 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 virtual meetings to the school. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through COVID-19. 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 progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

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

Since the initial inspection in 2019, senior leaders at the school and nursery class have successfully reviewed and developed clearer strategic staff roles. These are now more focused towards the school's improvement priorities. As a result, children's progress is now more visible, allowing staff to put in place more successful interventions that help children to make better progress in their learning.

All staff across the school now have agreed areas of leadership and curriculum development responsibility, aligned to key aspects of the school's priorities. This is a positive step forward in the development of leadership roles at all levels. The focus of these priorities is on nurture, parental engagement, digital learning and development of the religious and moral education curriculum.

During periods of school closure throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, staff at all levels have capitalised well on opportunities to develop aspects of the curriculum. For example, following successes in remote learning and teaching, groups of staff now collaborate to develop the technologies curriculum across all stages. During periods of remote learning, members of the senior leadership team and class teachers regularly communicated with parents. This helped sustain engagement in learning for all children. As a result, staff have improved relationships with parents and engage them more effectively in their child's learning and progress during this challenging time.

Staff now collaborate more effectively to enhance approaches to learning and teaching. During the periods of school closure, staff at all levels worked well together to provide peer support, both formally and informally. This has allowed staff to share and showcase successful approaches to learning, teaching and engagement at a very challenging time for staff, children and families.

Staff at all levels across the school are making good progress on developing children's entitlement to experience a broad general education across all eight curriculum areas. This

includes effective planning to build in a focus for progressing skills and knowledge across the curriculum through learning pathways from nursery, to the end of second level. Through pathways and curriculum planning, staff should take account of their role to help children to be successful by the end of the BGE. This will involve closer collaboration with secondary colleagues.

Senior leaders and staff have developed a more robust approach to monitoring children's learning and engagement to help ensure they make appropriate progress. Officers from the local authority have successfully supported this. As a result, class teachers at all stages now have a more robust, evidence-based picture of each child's learning, needs and next steps, throughout their learning journey.

Staff and stakeholders across the school community, including the Parent Council and the Parish Priest, have worked well together to create a 'positive relationships policy.' This policy is branded 'The St Mark's Way.' Commendably, this has been thoughtfully adapted for younger learners in the nursery class, ensuring that the policy can be 'lived' at all stages. All staff have completed appropriate professional learning to help clarify their roles in ensuring that this new policy has a sustained, positive impact on learner engagement. As a result, rights-based education, underpinned by key charters of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), has become a clear focus for improving relationships and enjoyment of learning, at all stages.

### What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are continuing to implement 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. South 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.

JohnPaul Cassidy  
HM Inspector