

24 February 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**St Serf's Primary School and Nursery Class
North Lanarkshire Council**

In June 2010, HM Inspectors published a report on your child's school. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another report in September 2011 and further letters in September 2012 and November 2013. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well children are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

We found that your children across the school are more interested and engaged in their learning. In the nursery class, children are happy, settled and familiar with their daily routines. They now have regular opportunities to talk about their learning with staff. At the primary stages, children are very positive about the improvements that are being made across their school. They are confident that the school is now a safer and happier place to be. They are extremely proud of the role they played in improving their school. For example, older children trained as peer mediators help to resolve issues successfully in the playground. The quality of children's learning experiences has improved considerably. Children are now clearer about the purpose of lessons and what they need to do to achieve success. They appreciate the regular opportunities they have to talk about their learning with their class teachers. These approaches are supporting children to take more responsibility for their own learning. The school plans to continue to build on this practice and help children to set and reflect on their personal learning targets as part of their daily practice. Children's achievements are readily recognised and celebrated across the school. Staff have created very attractive learning displays throughout the school to showcase learning. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to share their learning with parents at their weekly learning assemblies. Building on the practice in the nursery class, the school plans to develop learning folios for children to allow them to build up a comprehensive picture of their progress across their learning.

Across the school, children continue to make better progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. The school is beginning to record progress more accurately and plans to develop this further. In the nursery class, children enjoyed sharing Christmas stories. They do not yet demonstrate the same interest in writing. We have asked nursery staff to develop more opportunities for children to write throughout the playroom. In P6/5, children applied their knowledge of money in interesting, real-life contexts. The programme for health and wellbeing reflects the needs of the children very well. They speak very confidently about feeling safe, secure and achieving well.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff are now clearer about the organisation and delivery of the curriculum. They are now more adept at planning whole-school initiatives and themed topics to help children make better links across their learning. There are very good arrangements in place to support continuity and progression in children's learning at the early stages. Throughout the year, nursery children join children in P1 for planned joint learning sessions. In P1, children also benefit from the interesting play contexts they have to build on their experiences from nursery. They enjoy using their knowledge of castles to extend their role-play in their pretend castle. The well-planned approach to learning and teaching in the sciences is very effective and builds well on what children already know. Children across the primary classes are successfully developing their skills as 'young scientists'. Staff need to continue to develop the curriculum as planned, and ensure children's knowledge and skills are developed progressively as they move through the school. Across the school, staff promote a welcoming and inclusive ethos. Staff take very good account of children's individual needs. They have worked very hard to support children who have difficulties managing their behaviour. As a result, all children now make better progress. We have asked staff to continue to improve the pace of learning for higher-attaining children. Plans are in place to ensure that staff continue to take account of the needs of children who may require more support with their learning. In lessons, learning assistants work closely with teachers and provide good support to both individual children and groups. The headteacher works closely with staff to ensure children's individual learning needs are identified and planned for appropriately. The school has introduced a range of new approaches to engage parents in their children's learning, for example curriculum information events on literacy and numeracy, and increased use of social media.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The school has made very good progress towards addressing the improvements identified in the original inspection. The highly-effective headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She has, appropriately, ensured a strong focus on improving relationships across the school and cultivating a suitable ethos for learning. She has promoted this vision effectively with children, staff and parents, resulting in shared understanding of what improvements are required. The headteacher has continued to support staff well to take forward new developments to improve children's learning experiences. Notably, throughout all these necessary changes, she has helped to improve staff morale. The principal teachers provide good support to the headteacher. Across the school, staff are very proud of how they have helped to

improve the school. Together with the headteacher, they are keen to ensure they continue to improve learning outcomes for children. We have asked the school to continue to improve the school's approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress to ensure they all attain as highly as possible.

What happens next?

The school has made significant, sustained improvements since our last inspection in November 2013. There is clear evidence that, with continued support from North Lanarkshire Council, the school now has the capacity to continue to improve. We will make no further visits to St Serf's Primary School. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, North Lanarkshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Elizabeth C Montgomery
HM Inspector

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