

2 February 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**St Ninian's Primary School and Nursery Class
Dumfries and Galloway Council**

In December 2013, HM Inspectors published a letter 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 letter in January 2015. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and parents, 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?

St Ninian's Primary School and Nursery Class is a welcoming and exciting place to learn. Across the school, children are motivated to do their best for each other and for the staff. We found that further improvements have been made to the ways in which children talk about their learning. In the nursery class, children are now much more involved in planning engaging experiences through their interests. For example, they have set up their own French café to enable them to use their learning in French as they play. Children are enthusiastic about their achievements and use all of their time in nursery productively. At the primary stages, most children told us how well their individual learning targets are helping them to become more independent and successful in their learning both within and outwith school. We saw that children are focused, working well in groups and as individuals.

The improvement in achievement across the school has increased significantly since the original inspection. The four house groups have helped to establish a deep sense of purpose across the school. The profile of achievement is high and children now readily share their successes from outwith school. A school choir has been formed and is performing confidently at local festivals and events. The whole school is proud of their success. In the nursery class, children display all of their learning and share it confidently with their families at open events. They are now making better progress in early language and mathematics. Children, through investigative activity, are becoming active young explorers. At the primary stages, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is still variable. However, there are measurable signs of continuing improvement. Staff are taking action to address this over time

through paying very close attention to how well children are doing in all aspects of their classwork. Children's skills in listening and talking have continued to develop well. This is enabling more effective classroom discussion and opportunities for learners to share their thinking and ideas. Progress in improving standards in reading, writing and numeracy are driven by the headteacher, supported by the principal teachers, and are monitored very closely. There are examples where children have made significant progress but this needs to become more consistent.

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

The headteacher has continued to build on the school's aspirations for children and staff. There is now a collaborative approach amongst staff to continue to improve teaching. Overall, lessons are set at the right level of challenge for most children. The pace of learning is quicker and children across the school are responding enthusiastically to the increased expectations. We have asked the school to take forward their plans to establish even greater consistency in teaching by sharing the examples of very high quality teaching we observed during our visit.

Across the school, the curriculum has become much broader. Staff have worked very well together to ensure children gain the knowledge and skills Curriculum for Excellence has to offer. Staff are continuing to develop effective ways to assess how well children are learning. The quality of team work amongst the staff is enabling them to focus on improving how children progress through the curriculum from stage-to-stage. In the nursery, children are benefiting from a better organised learning environment which offers space for them to be spontaneous in their play. They can now choose to play indoors or outside during their session. At the primary stages, children explained how much they enjoy their topics of study and how these are supporting them to develop important skills.

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

The headteacher demonstrates clear and decisive leadership. She continues to work exceptionally hard to drive school improvement. Through her work, she has brought about professionalism and teamwork amongst the staff. As a result, almost all staff have ambition for your children. A permanent senior management team and a number of new staff have brought a new dynamic to the school which children are benefiting from. New processes for self-evaluation have been established. These are helping staff to measure how well your children are progressing and to take action when children need extra help to learn. Staff recognise that improving attainment across the school is still a priority. Your views are valued and the school can now demonstrate what actions they have taken to address these views. The parent council continues to play an active role within the school. Children told us that they feel valued and happy in school. They are proud of their school community and are making an important contribution to enhancing the wellbeing of their peers.

What happens next?

There is evidence of improvement in key areas of the school's work since the original inspection. The headteacher has led the school very effectively to achieve the areas for improvement needed. Children are now more actively involved in their own

learning. Staff understand the need to continue to improve the curriculum across the school. They know that improving attainment through robust self-evaluation and consistently high quality teaching remains a high priority.

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with the original letter. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Dumfries and Galloway Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We shall ask Dumfries and Galloway Council to provide us with a progress report within one year. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Shona ES Taylor
HM Inspector

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