

19 August 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Isobel Mair School and Family Centre
East Renfrewshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. We included in our inspection, the school's Family Centre, the primary and secondary provision, the authority-wide sensory support service and the inclusion support service. During our visit, we talked to parents, children and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children and young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children and young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including how the school assesses learners' progress, encourages children and young people to be healthy and how well it works with key partner agencies to support learning. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school and its services are in improving children's and young people's education.

How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Staff provide a nurturing, supportive environment which is helping children to learn and achieve very well. Throughout the Family Centre, relationships are warm, friendly and encouraging. Children arrive eagerly to each session and quickly settle to a good range of activities. They are able to make choices in their activities and in accessing the resources set out for them. They approach tasks with curiosity and enthusiasm. Many show sustained concentration and persevere with tasks, particularly when working out how to roll balls down sloping tracks or when using the magnets in the science area. Staff should continue to build on opportunities for children to have responsibilities, to be independent and to make choices. The current snack arrangements could better support social skills and independence. Home visits to each family allow key workers to gather information on children's individual needs. Staff continue to build on this information once children have settled into the centre.

Across the school, the sensory support and inclusion support services, staff have excellent relationships with children and young people. They use nurturing approaches skilfully to help children and young people feel secure, cared for and to enable them to maximise their potential. Staff have a sound understanding of their individual responsibilities to support children and young people to be all that they can be. Across the school, children and young people are helped to understand what they are expected to learn in lessons by the very creative and consistent way that teachers share learning intentions. Teachers make excellent use of a wide range of high-tech

communication aids to support learners to communicate. This is leading consistently to high levels of engagement and participation in learning activities. Very high-quality planning and feedback tailored to their individual needs help to ensure that children and young people are challenged at an appropriate level. In all classes, young people self-evaluate their work and receive helpful feedback from staff in a way that is most appropriate to their needs. The school has developed very successfully a communication-friendly environment where all children and young people can make choices in a wide range of learning contexts. Staff do this consistently by using a range of approaches specific to learners' needs including visual supports, signing, using symbols, switches and speech. Their experiences are further enriched by the school's excellent outdoor learning environment.

Promoting, recognising and celebrating achievement are outstanding features of learning in Isobel Mair School and Family Centre. In the Family Centre, staff have developed very effective ways of celebrating children's achievements. Children's work is displayed attractively in the playroom or on the foyer walls. Folders containing photographs and children's work capture effectively their progress in learning. Across the school and services, children and young people are very actively involved in a range of activities and experiences which provide opportunities to recognise and celebrate achievement. The school's imaginative 'Fifty things to do before you leave Isobel Mair' uses an innovative, fun approach to providing enrichment, breadth and depth to young people's achievements using multi-sensory approaches. Young people confidently present their views in a wide range of national, local authority and school events. These included a recent *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* conference hosted by the school and attended by a wide range of education and health professionals and parents. Culture and creativity is a strong feature of the school. Young people are highly motivated by opportunities to participate in a wide range of performing arts activities. Dance and music are having a profound impact on young people's quality of life and ability to express themselves. A number of young people are developing their confidence as individuals and show this when performing with the school's community unity choir, in productions such as 'Fame' and the sensory nativity play, 'A Little Bird Told Me'. The school's dance group, Reels on Wheels demonstrate their dancing skills at local events including one hosted recently by the City Chambers. A large number of young people have successfully competed in running, swimming and athletics competitions with community sports groups. One pupil at the senior phase has experienced a very high level of sporting success at national and international level, winning silver and gold medals at the 2013 Special Olympics and has been selected to take part in the 2015 World Special Olympics. Children and young people supported by sensory support service teachers are encouraged to be confident and independent learners in their mainstream primary and secondary schools. In the primary schools, children with a hearing impairment take responsibility for managing their own hearing aids and radio aids. Young people in mainstream secondary schools recently produced their own support 'Getting it Right for Me'. This is helping their mainstream subject teachers to understand the optimum learning environment and appropriate approaches to supporting them with their particular hearing loss.

In the Family Centre, children are developing very good skills in early literacy and mathematics. Children are confident and articulate communicators. They have a wide ranging vocabulary and they talk easily to adults and each other. Many children can

write and recognise letters and words. In early mathematics, they enjoy using the interactive board to order numbers up to 20. Almost all can count, sort and match and almost all can identify number symbols. Over the past three years, all young people at the senior phase successfully achieved ASDAN and National Qualification awards and at Access 1 and 2 in a variety of units including literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, computing studies, art and music. A few have achieved awards at Intermediate 1. The school has successfully supported around 30 young people from local authority secondary schools to achieve Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, Volunteering Saltire Awards and an Education Convener's Award. Staff use relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts to develop children and young people's literacy skills by building on their personal experiences. They have very good opportunities to read or listen to a range of texts, sensory stories and story sacks. Numeracy is firmly embedded across all curricular areas. In all classes, counting is used routinely at the beginning and end of activities and children are encouraged to say or sign numbers along with staff. Children are making very good progress with their individual numeracy targets. They are learning turn taking and are developing an understanding of size, quantity, number, money and measurement related to key life skills. At all stages, children and young people are making outstanding progress in achieving individual health and wellbeing targets. This is evident in the very high-quality relationships between staff, children and young people, the climate of trust and respect and the calm purposeful learning environment. All young people from local secondary schools who attended the inclusion support service gained either National 2 or 3 awards in personal development or National 3 wellbeing awards. Attainment in reading and maths for children and young people in mainstream schools with a hearing or visual impairment is very good. A recent East Renfrewshire survey shows that children and young people with a hearing impairment supported by the sensory support service are attaining significantly higher than others across Scotland.

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

In the Family Centre, staff meet children's needs very well. Partnership working with other professionals and parents is a strength of the centre. Partners such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists support children very well before they come into the nursery and when moving on to primary school. Tasks and activities meet the needs of most children. The Family Centre should continue with its plans to further develop staff's questioning skills to support and challenge children through their interventions and through the activities they provide. Children with additional support needs are having their needs met very well. They have appropriate Care and Learning plans. Staff ensure that children are presented with appropriate multi-sensory learning experiences. Those children with very complex needs who are too unwell to attend the Family Centre on a regular basis, benefit from regular home play sessions. The environment for learning makes a considerable contribution to meeting the learning needs of all children and young people across the school and services. The small classes with a very good staff to pupil ratio have access to safe, stimulating outdoor spaces and a number of additional teaching areas, such as the adventure room, multisensory room and soft play area that allow staff to plan flexibly for children and young people. Overall, tasks and activities are very well planned to meet the different needs of learners within each class. Personalised support, resources and approaches to learning and teaching are key features in almost

all lessons. Tasks are appropriately challenging for learners and the pace of learning is brisk. Children and young people in mainstream schools, nurseries and in the home setting are very well supported by the sensory support teachers. They receive a level of support appropriate to their needs in agreement with parents, their mainstream schools and nurseries. Sensory support staff ensure learning tasks and the environment are accessible through advice, support and specific technology such as Soundfield system, technology with accessible software and other information and communication technology (ICT) such as tablets. The local authority's staged intervention process ensures that additional support needs are identified and assessed and that the impact of support is reviewed regularly. The school has adopted a very positive approach to identifying and supporting children with behavioural difficulties. Staff are highly skilled at modelling good behaviour and developing young people's skills in self-regulation. Almost all children and young people are making very good progress towards targets set within individualised educational programmes (IEPs). These are of a consistently high standard and provide a robust platform for planning and assessing progress across all aspects of a child's learning. All children and young people attending Isobel Mair School have a coordinated support plan.

In the Family Centre, staff are delivering a curriculum which is broad, well-balanced and firmly based on play, active learning and enjoyment. Staff plan links and relevant connections across different aspects of the curriculum. As a result, children are developing and using their skills in various situations, including for learning, life and work. Outdoor learning is a developing focus within the Family Centre's curricular framework. Staff should continue to develop more problem solving and enquiry opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, within the planned curriculum to further enhance the skills and thinking processes of children. Across the primary and secondary stages, children and young people are receiving their full entitlement to the experiences and outcomes within the broad general education and to the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. At the primary and secondary stages, staff have developed a fully integrated and highly-effective approach to planning learning based on national guidance. Plans at all levels are linked to young people's IEP targets.

Staff plan across the four contexts of the curriculum. They deliver personalised and challenging programmes and courses within a coherent skills profile across all areas of the curriculum. Learners' progress is rigorously assessed and moderated through the school's well established systems which include regular 'learning conversations' in which all staff participate. Expressive Arts is a very strong feature of the curriculum at all stages. Music therapy, instrumental tuition, music making and the school choirs, art and drama provide very good opportunities for children and young people to be creative, to collaborate with others and to showcase their skills and talents to family and friends. The well-planned programme for science has an appropriate emphasis on developing young people's curiosity and interest in the natural world. Practical experiments such as finding out how volcanoes work, enable learners to develop their skills in investigation and enquiry. Outdoor learning provides a rich context for learning, well embedded within the school's curriculum. All classes make very good use of the excellent school grounds to play, explore, develop mobility and confidence on different surfaces as well as learning about the natural world around them. Integration is an outstanding feature of planning and young people at the senior phase are achieving a wide range of units and courses at National 1, 2 and 3 leading to positive destinations. The senior phase programme provides a very positive set of

opportunities for young people to develop life skills, and make choices in preparation for their next phase in life. They participate in the Yes Academy Skills for Work: Grow, Cook and Eat programme annually. Staff from East Renfrewshire Vocational Team, Young Enterprise Scotland and West College Scotland support young people to experience learning in a range of environments whilst gaining life skills including gardening and cooking.

Sensory support staff adapt the curriculum for children and young people with a hearing or visual impairment in response to their individual needs. They work in collaboration with mainstream schools and nurseries to ensure pupils access Curriculum for Excellence and other programmes and courses, including adaptations and support for National Qualifications. Specific resources, ICT or teaching approaches are used very well to ensure access to the curriculum. Aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum are personalised to help children and young people develop their mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. For example, teachers discuss aspects of their visual and hearing impairment and how they can be independent and overcome barriers. In some cases, support teachers offer additional programmes and courses such as touch typing and braille.

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

The school has highly-developed, integrated and inclusive processes for self-evaluation which are leading to demonstrable improvements. These processes are impacting very positively on learners' experiences, achievements, wellbeing and future destinations. Approaches to planning and implementing Curriculum for Excellence are at an advanced stage in the primary and secondary stages. The school is meeting and in some aspects, exceeding expectations for planning changes based on self-evaluation. Arrangements for planning, assessing and tracking learners' progress and achievements include well-developed and accredited moderation. In Isobel Mair School and Family Centre and its sensory support and inclusion services, all staff are very committed to improvement and willingly reflect on their work including how it impacts on children and young people. The rigorous programme of monitoring includes a range of planned activities such as learning conversations with partner agencies and teachers, feedback from parents' evenings, IEP targets and classroom visits with next steps for staff. Leadership of the school and its services is outstanding. The headteacher is visionary and is a strategic thinker who empowers and develops the capacity for leadership across the senior management team and staff. Large numbers of staff take on leadership roles and are confident in taking on additional responsibilities and leading initiatives as curriculum champions, moderation facilitators and members of the quality teams.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The positive, nurturing ethos and warm relationships across the Family Centre, school, sensory support and inclusion support services.
- Creative approaches to involving children and young people in their learning which are leading to rich, meaningful learning experiences.
- Support for learners' communication including using high-tech communication aids.

- Integrated and inclusive approaches to assessing children and young people's needs, planning their learning and tracking and moderating their progress with key partners.
- Processes for self-evaluation which are impacting positively on learners' experiences, achievements, their health and wellbeing and future destinations.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the impact of leadership for learning across the school.

We discussed with staff and East Renfrewshire Council how they might continue to improve the school and Family Centre. This is what we agreed with them.

- In the Family Centre, continue to build on opportunities for children to have responsibilities, be independent and make choices.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are more than satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are extremely confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We shall work with the school and East Renfrewshire Council to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Dr Kate Hannah
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/IsobelMairSchoolEastRenfrewshire.asp>

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