

21 June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

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

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children 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 well children and their families are supported. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

**How well do children learn and achieve?**

At the primary stages, children have very positive learning experiences. Children in the nursery respond well when given responsibilities such as dressing independently for going outdoors. They enjoy playing and exploring outside in the garden. We have asked nursery staff to extend and develop children's learning through play and to be clear about what they expect children to learn. Almost all children in the primary stages are eager to learn and are motivated by interesting learning activities, including their opportunities to learn outdoors. They are skilled in sharing ideas and talking about their learning. They work effectively in groups and reflect regularly on how well they are progressing. Children at the primary stages are proud of their school and achievements. They are responding positively to the recognition given to successes at assemblies, displayed on the school's walls and in learning journals or e portfolios. Children are actively involved in the life of the school. Staff relationships with children are very positive. Children feel valued and develop leadership and friendships across the school through their involvement in 'Houses' and a variety of pupil voice groups. They work hard to ensure others feel included in activities both within class and in the wider school community. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children are developing their understanding of the needs of others through a variety of fundraising activities for charities. P6 children have been especially successful in learning about and understanding the lives and needs of others through their selection to participate in the UNICEF Kid Power challenge.

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, most children, including those who have English as an additional language, are making good progress in literacy and English. Most children in the nursery are making good progress when listening to stories and talking to one another. Almost all can recognise their own name and show interest in learning to write. At the primary stages, most children listen attentively and

express their views and opinions with confidence. Children's writing is of a good standard overall and most are making good progress in reading. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children in the nursery class are learning to recognise numbers and can count and match a variety of objects. At the primary stages, children are developing confidence in their mental agility and applying their skills to solve problems. Children are building on their understanding of fractions and, by P7, are confident in calculating decimals and percentages. The school recognises that children across the school are capable of progressing through the Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy and literacy at a more consistently brisk pace. Most children in the nursery class are developing an understanding of right and wrong. We have asked the nursery staff to develop children's understanding of sharing and taking turns and being more involved in the school's successful approaches to developing fairness and respect. At the primary stages, children are making good progress in developing knowledge and understanding of health and wellbeing and contribute well to the life of their school.

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

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, staff provide a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages children to value one another's achievements and ensures a positive climate for children to learn. Children who have English as an additional language or who require additional support are included very well in classes. Overall, children's learning needs are well supported. The learning environment is used well to support learners and staff provide well-judged individual and group activities to meet a range of needs. However, we have asked the school to ensure learning is sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of all children and that progress is carefully tracked across all stages and the nursery class. Staff work closely with partners, parents and one another to identify when support for children's learning is appropriate. This is especially successful for children requiring social and emotional support. Nursery parents are developing skills in supporting their children's learning through the valued and successful 'Family Lunch Club'. Staff who work with children with additional support needs work effectively as a team and support children and their families very well. Pastoral care and approaches to inclusion are strong features of the school's work in ensuring children make progress and learn.

Staff provide children with interesting and motivating opportunities that involve them actively in their learning. The school's strong sense of values founded on the Catholic faith is reflected in the school's curriculum. In all classes, children have a broad experience across the curriculum and are developing awareness of thinking about their learning skills. Staff work effectively together and share their strengths and expertise to deliver aspects such as Spanish, science and expressive arts. This team approach has successfully enhanced learning at the early level of Curriculum for Excellence and children's learning through play. Staff are focusing on developing outdoor education and working with partners such as the YMCA to refresh and further develop relevant programmes of learning. The recent 'Walking Wednesday' initiative takes children into the school's wider local environment and is successfully motivating children to learn outdoors. Staff are continuing to review and revise health and wellbeing and this is leading to improved progress in this area. Children and their families are well supported in their move from nursery to starting school. Parents are informed about the work of the school at well-attended introductory information meetings. Nursery

staff now need to extend their approaches to information sharing to include more detail about children's learning and progress. The headteacher and staff have fostered strong links with Cardinal Newman High School and are developing a shared understanding of the curriculum and standards. A wide range of joint activities support P7 children in feeling confident and well included in preparation when they enter S1.

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

The headteacher is experienced and well established in his post and has gained the support of parents, staff and the community. Through the range of approaches he has developed to seek feedback on the school's work and promotion of positive relationships, he knows children and their families well. The headteacher is ably supported by the recently appointed principal teacher. She is an effective leader and has already made a positive impact on the nursery. Staff work very effectively as a team and have created a climate of shared responsibilities and highly value the ideas and proposals suggested by pupils. Close partnership working has created a very positive school environment for learning. A growing number of staff take leadership roles linked to the school's improvement priorities. They are a skilled team who provide children with consistently high quality learning experiences. Staff are committed to developing their skills and further improving the curriculum. The headteacher now needs to ensure the school's self-improvement has a stronger focus on raising attainment and further improving the work of the nursery. A stronger focus on approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress is now a priority to bring about improved use of assessment and consistency in children's progress through the Curriculum for Excellence levels. The school should involve partners more in evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives and planning for improvements. An increased rigour to analysing information about the school's performance will support staff and raise expectations further. We are confident the school will continue to improve and that the headteacher together with the staff team have the capacity to lead the school's self-improvement. Teamwork is strong amongst staff, parents are supportive and children are very enthusiastic learners. With continued support from North Lanarkshire Council and raised expectations from the headteacher, St Gerard's Primary School and Nursery Class should continue to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Enthusiastic and confident children who are motivated to learn.
- The high quality learning and teaching across the primary classes.
- Effective teamwork of staff and the high quality pastoral support provided for children and their families.
- The value placed upon children's achievements and increased opportunities for them to learn outdoors.

We discussed with staff and North Lanarkshire Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Increase rigour to evaluating the school's work to raise attainment and ensure all children progress as well as possible.
- Improve children's learning experiences in the nursery.

## **What happens at the end of the inspection?**

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. 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.

Susan Gow  
HM Inspector

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

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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