

14 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 Patrick's Primary School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently engaged in discussion with staff and the local authority. Our engagement helped us learn more about how children and their families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 officer the school's progress in taking forward the recommendations from our original inspection.

This letter sets out what we found during our visit.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Staff at St Patrick's Primary School continue to respond effectively to the challenges arising from the pandemic to ensure that they support children and their families. During lockdown, resources such as laptops, writing and drawing materials and other necessary equipment were distributed to family homes where required. Staff offered each other and parents opportunities to improve their digital skills. Staff also signposted for parents how to access support for challenges arising as a result of the pandemic.

Challenges faced by the school and staff have included periods of isolation, staff and pupil absence and issues around supporting the health and wellbeing of the general school community as a direct result of the pandemic. The headteacher and staff feel that most of the issues around COVID-19 are being resolved in school appropriately, progress in key areas is being made and they are optimistic about moving forward with the school improvement agenda. The headteacher has worked well with staff, children and parents to maintain effective teaching and learning across the school.

The headteacher and staff have taken positive steps towards recovery including the organisation of tuition groups in school to support children's learning. There is an enhanced focus on health and wellbeing across the school and a greater emphasis on working with parents and involving them in the life of the school. For example, some parents are now participating in the school curriculum development group. Attendance at school is very good and staff are working hard with parents to maintain children's attendance. Parents actively promote a sense of community through organising events, which encourage further community and parental involvement.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

The headteacher and staff recently reviewed the school's vision, value and aims. These are now central to the daily life of the school and are referred to regularly during class lessons, assemblies and in general conversation about the school. Children speak well about their school and the learning they enjoy. Children participate well in the growing number of school

activities, for example, in health and wellbeing and science. Parents also speak about their enhanced role within the school community and are pleased to be given the opportunity to join sub-groups and committees which support a number of school projects.

The headteacher and staff are developing very well their approaches to more regular and robust self-evaluation. Leadership at all levels in school supports ongoing and planned improvements well. All staff are involved in school improvement. Staff plan strategically together and are focusing on working together to understand national standards when assessing children's progress. Staff are aware of the need to ensure learning is at the right level of difficulty for all learners, particularly in response to the effect COVID-19 has had on children's progress.

The headteacher empowers all staff. As a result, teachers feel valued, motivated and enthusiastic about their areas of responsibility. Teachers are working well together to share their good practice and meet the needs of all learners.

Staff are developing new skills through engaging well with each other in professional development opportunities. This is resulting in improvements in the curriculum, as well as improving learner's experiences. Clear guidance on teaching and learning is resulting in improvements in the classroom, particularly in digital learning, reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements in outdoor learning, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, are now creating interesting and creative opportunities for children to learn in both the classroom and outdoors. For example, children are developing their skills in working together through personal challenge activities when working outdoors in the Forest Schools initiative. The Forest Schools programme is being used well to support individual children. The revised health and wellbeing programme supports children well to engage in regular conversations about their wellbeing and emotional health.

The headteacher, working collaboratively with the staff team and supported by the local authority, has achieved a number of positive improvements over the last few months. The quality of learner's experiences has improved and this is reflected in the children's attainment recorded by staff over a relatively short period of time. The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the strengths and next steps for the school to ensure it continues to improve. Almost all staff are contributing to this improvement through their leadership of various important initiatives across the school.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing 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. West Dunbartonshire Council will continue to inform parents about the school's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality its education service.

James McCrory
HM Inspector