24 November 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on St Serf's Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the setting and North Lanarkshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the nursery class again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff about the steps the setting has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the setting has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

In the nursery, staff should enhance learning environments to better support children's learning experiences. Staff should develop approaches to engage children in high-quality interactions that will extend vocabulary and thinking skills. This should be supported by appropriate and targeted professional learning activities.

Positive progress has been made with this area for improvement. The nursery team is now more consistent, and staff are working well together to make the necessary improvements. They have engaged positively with local authority officers who are providing support.

In the last year, there have been a number of changes within the senior leadership and staff team. Staff have accessed a range of helpful professional learning to deepen their knowledge and develop practice. As a result, positive improvement is evident within the nursery playroom and outdoors. Staff have used self-evaluation tools successfully, such as audits, to help them provide a wider range of learning experiences that increasingly reflect children's interests.

Children engage well with learning experiences and make independent choices about where they wish to play. Most children are keen to share their thoughts and ideas with staff. This is now influencing specific areas of the playroom such as role play, the fairy garden and block play. Staff confidence continues to grow in relation to using observations of children's play to help them provide relevant resources to support specific interests. Staff should continue to build on this positive start and increase opportunities for children to deepen their learning and challenge themselves during play. Senior leaders have planned training for staff on approaches to help young children learn. This should support staff to build their knowledge further on the importance of key experiences, and how these support the progression of learning. Staff have taken positive steps to improve the outdoor area. There is now a wider range of experiences for children to access. Staff should continue to support play outdoors by increasing opportunities for children to lead their own learning through an increased range of open-ended resources.

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Staff interactions with children are consistently warm and nurturing. They engage readily in conversation with children throughout the day. Staff encourage children to share their thoughts and feelings as part of daily play. They read stories and sing songs and rhymes regularly to support children's communication and early language development. Staff continue to develop their interaction skills with the help of professional learning, based on national guidance. Increasingly, they are identifying potential open-ended questions and key words to use during learning experiences to extend children's vocabulary and thinking skills. They should continue to embed this consistently into their interactions with children.

In the nursery, senior leaders and staff should review the planning of learning experiences. Approaches to planning should build on children's interests and prior learning. Planned learning should allow children to revisit prior experiences to ensure application and depth of learning for children.

Positive progress has been made with this area for improvement. Working with the local authority, staff have reviewed and improved aspects of how they plan for children's learning experiences. As a result, planned learning is having a positive impact on children's experiences and staff interactions.

Staff continue to develop their practice in observing and documenting children's learning. Their observations of children are recorded through an online platform. These are beginning to demonstrate what children are learning as they play. As staff confidence increases, they need to record children's learning more regularly. Planned professional learning should support staff further, to create high-quality observations. Moving forward, staff need to ensure observations give information about the context, children's significant learning and include children's thoughts about their own learning. This should help staff to express more clearly the basis for their professional judgements and demonstrate children's progress over time.

Staff are embracing the more collaborative approach to improvement, supported by quality professional learning. They are now more involved in the planning process, sharing their own ideas and making important links to children's key learning. Children's interest in planned learning is evident in their play, for example exploring the story of the three bears and experimenting with measure. The current planning process contains a high level of information which is directing the focus for children's learning. With support from the local authority, staff now need to streamline this process. They should make clear links to their observations of children's learning and developing skills within relevant contexts. Moving forward, staff should actively involve children in planning their own learning through a more responsive approach.

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In nursery and school, senior leaders should develop further their approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress. They should ensure that approaches measure better the progress children make over time and the impact interventions have in closing attainment gaps.

This area for improvement is at a very early stage of development. Senior leaders and staff need more time to develop tracking and monitoring processes further. Senior leaders correctly prioritised the development of staff skills in interactions and observations of children's learning. This work is ongoing and is fundamental to gathering robust information about each child's learning and progress.

Regular professional discussions between senior leaders and staff, increasingly support the team to develop their understanding of children's progress. Staff now identify individual targets for children, however these are not consistently measurable or sufficiently focused on learning. As planned, professional learning on observation should help staff develop these skills further to identify more relevant targets that support children to make appropriate progress. Building on this, staff should make more effective use of these targets to influence planning for children's learning.

Children's individual online records are not yet offering sufficiently detailed information to effectively demonstrate children's progress over time. As a short-term measure, senior leaders have put in place tracking paperwork based on the team's judgements of children's progress. This is not yet producing sufficient data to determine the progress children are making across their learning. Senior leaders plan to implement the local authority's new tracking system. Before this, it will be important that staff continue to develop how they record significant learning, with a focus on evaluating children's skills. This should ensure that staff have robust information to identify confidently the progress children are making. It will also be important to use this data to demonstrate where children may require additional support or challenge in their learning.

What happens next?

The setting has made some progress since the original inspection. We will ask for a report on progress within one year of the inspection. This report will inform any decision made by HMIE regarding further engagement. This may include another inspection visit. When such a decision is made, we will write to you again detailing the improvements the setting has made and outlining any further action, agreed with North Lanarkshire Council that we intend to take.

Sandra Kehoe
HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.

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