

23 September 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In August 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on St Mary's Primary School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and North Lanarkshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school 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 school 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 school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Improve the leadership of change in the school and nursery. Senior leaders, with support from the local authority, need to ensure that improvement priorities are identified through robust self-evaluation and addressed effectively.

Since the initial inspection, school and nursery senior leaders have agreed clear leadership remits and responsibilities. The headteacher and senior leaders work effectively together providing direction, guidance and support for the school and nursery. This has resulted in strong, positive progress in almost all areas of improvement.

Senior leaders participated in professional learning and worked closely with local authority staff and other partners. This has further developed their professional understanding and skills in improvement planning, data analysis and self-evaluation. They now identify and select priorities for school and nursery improvement more effectively using a well-considered range of robust evidence. They should continue to build on this positive approach.

In the nursery, staffing changes, including within leadership roles, have slowed the progress of aspects of improvement work. Senior leaders should continue to strengthen improvement planning processes and self-evaluation, working closely with practitioners.

Senior leaders and school staff now set clearer targets for raising attainment and attendance for children. They now measure the impact of this work more rigorously. Senior leaders and staff use evidence and data better to help identify, plan and address any attainment gaps across the school. Working closely together, they have improved how they review and evaluate the impact of funded interventions.

Senior leaders and staff have developed systematic and robust quality assurance arrangements which they outline clearly in an agreed calendar for the school. This includes evaluating learning and teaching and reviewing children's work on a regular basis. Senior leaders provide teachers with helpful individual feedback. Teachers use this effectively to develop their classroom practice and to embed consistent approaches. Senior leaders and staff now have a shared understanding of the overall strengths and next steps across the school. This has helped them to drive forward strong improvement in learning, teaching and assessment.

Since the initial inspection, school and nursery staff have engaged in relevant professional learning which has impacted positively on outcomes for children. Teachers are now closely involved in school improvement through a 'house' approach. They work very well with groups of children to lead identified areas of development. This is impacting positively on the quality of learning and teaching and wider school life. Recently, a few staff have supported pupil-led groups to gain nationally recognised achievements for sports participation and rights-based learning. Senior leaders should continue to empower and support staff to lead improvements across the school and nursery.

All children across the school are now involved in leading change. Senior leaders and staff consult with children regularly using a range of inclusive approaches. They use children's views to shape school decisions, including approaches to learning and teaching.

Improve the quality of planning in the school. Senior leaders and teachers need to ensure that all planning across the curriculum is based on accurate assessment information to meet the learning needs of all children.

Since the initial inspection, senior leaders and teachers have developed and embedded improved approaches to forward planning across the curriculum. Senior leaders provide clear guidance that supports staff well and there is now a more consistent format used for planning. All teachers have participated in useful professional learning sessions on planning and evaluating learning and teaching. They plan together regularly across stages, which helps to develop their shared understanding of effective practice. They each use a range of assessment data well, including tracking information, when planning for their classes. All teachers now include reflective evaluations of learning and teaching across the curriculum within their planning. They should continue to develop how they use these evaluations when planning to meet the needs of each child.

Currently, senior leaders are working closely with children, staff and parents to develop a curriculum rationale. This collaborative approach is supporting the school community to share and discuss their views on what and how children should learn. As planned, staff should use the agreed curriculum rationale to support planning across the school and nursery.

Senior leaders and staff have improved the quality of target setting within individual education plans for children requiring additional support with their learning. Staff now clearly outline steps for success and review these regularly with identified children and parents. As a result of these improvements, there is now clearer evidence of individual children's progress in learning and wellbeing.

Improve the understanding of national standards. Senior leaders and teachers need to work with colleagues across the school and local authority to develop further their understanding of progress within and across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.

Since the initial inspection, senior leaders and teachers have improved their understanding of national standards. Local authority staff have provided valuable professional learning and support. This has helped senior leaders and staff to deepen their understanding of children's progress, across and within CfE levels. Senior leaders and staff have also improved the quality of their meetings about children's progress and attainment. Teachers now

demonstrate more confidence and accuracy when making professional judgements about children's achievement of CfE levels.

Improve assessment and tracking within the school and nursery. Senior leaders, teachers and practitioners need to develop more effective approaches to assessing and tracking children's learning. This will help them to make more accurate evaluations about children's progress and better meet children's learning needs.

Since the initial inspection, teachers and practitioners have improved approaches to assessment and tracking within the school and nursery.

Within the nursery, senior leaders and staff have worked effectively with local authority colleagues to improve approaches to assessment. Practitioners now use observations more effectively when assessing children's learning. They record children's learning well in floorbooks and through online learning journals. This approach helps them to evaluate children's progress more effectively. Practitioners are aware of all children's needs and meet these well through appropriate play experiences. As planned, senior leaders and staff should now strengthen approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress across the curriculum.

In school, senior leaders have created an overview, outlining which assessments staff should carry out with children at different points in the year. Teachers find this useful, and it has helped to increase the consistency of assessments used across the school. Senior leaders worked with the local authority pedagogy team to provide professional learning for staff on effective approaches to assessment. As a result, teachers now collate more robust evidence from a breadth of assessments. They continue to improve how they use this information to inform planning for children's learning.

Across the school, children have developed further their skills in self- and peer-assessment. Teachers now provide children with regular verbal feedback. Currently, most written feedback for children helps them to recognise what they have done well. Teachers should now ensure that their feedback also supports children to understand what they need to do next to improve.

Teachers now use information from formative and summative assessments to better plan tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty. A few children would still benefit from increased challenge. As planned, senior leaders and teachers should continue to strengthen how they deliver learning at the right level to meet each child's needs.

The headteacher has strengthened systems to track children's attainment over time. These systems support senior leaders and staff to monitor and discuss children's attainment and progress. Next session, a new tracking tool is being introduced across the local authority. Senior leaders plan to use this new tool to check and monitor the attainment of individuals, groups and cohorts of children in more detail.

Raise attainment and ensure that all children make the best possible progress in their learning in the school and nursery.

Senior leaders and staff have made strong progress in raising children's attainment and ensuring that children make the best possible progress in their learning in the school and nursery. Senior leaders now have a clear plan in place for raising attainment and accelerating children's progress which is understood well by staff.

Senior leaders and staff have worked effectively with the local authority pedagogy team. Working closely together, they have improved the consistency of high-quality learning and teaching across the school. This has helped to raise children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. Staff have also increased children's engagement and ownership of learning, which is supporting children to attain well and make better progress.

Staff ensure children who require additional support receive effective, targeted interventions through well-planned, bespoke learning programmes. As a result, children who need extra support make good progress towards their individual targets.

Children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy has improved since the initial inspection. Senior leaders and teachers have a more robust understanding of national standards. Their professional judgements are now rigorous and attainment data is accurate. In June 2025, most children in P1, P4 and P7 achieved nationally expected CfE levels in literacy and English. Almost all children in P1, P4 and P7 achieved nationally expected levels in numeracy and mathematics. The overall percentage of children achieving nationally expected levels in literacy and English increased by 14% since last session, to 92% in June 2025. In numeracy and mathematics, the overall percentage of children achieving also increased by 14%, to 93%.

In the nursery, most children continue to make good progress in early communication, language and literacy. They confidently communicate with known adults and enjoy listening to stories. Most children mark-make in a variety of contexts and enjoy exploring initial letter sounds. Most children now make good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They count confidently during play and routines and explore volume and capacity while they play.

Senior leaders and staff continue to focus on maximising and supporting school attendance. As a result, attendance has increased since last session. Currently, the school's overall attendance average is 93.89% which is above the local authority average. Attendance has also significantly increased for most children who receive targeted support. Improved attendance is supporting children to make progress in their learning.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. North Lanarkshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Lisa Marie McDonnell
HM Inspector