

14 June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Underbank Primary School  
South 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 the impact of the forest school to enhance learning within Curriculum for Excellence and partnership working to widen the school curriculum. 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?**

Across the school, children are polite, well-behaved and proud of their school. They are motivated in their learning as a result of the stimulating and supportive environment. Almost all children work well together and show they can co-operate with each other. In almost all lessons, teachers are ensuring that children are clear about what they are learning and how they can improve. Children, staff and parents contribute very actively to the life of the school and the wider community. Pupil voice is valued at Underbank and children are active participants in initiatives such as the 90th year school celebrations, pupil council, the four school improvement committees and through buddying activities. Children are achieving success through participation in sports including netball, football and athletics. Children's Rights are becoming increasingly embedded in the life and work of the school.

All classes have used the United Nations 'Rights of the Child' to create their Class Charter. The Forest School provides children with planned opportunities and experiences such as den building and creating clay tree sculptures. This broadens and enriches their learning. Almost all children gain confidence through performing in whole school shows such as the Christmas and Easter shows. The school has very strong links with the local community and works hard to ensure children understand their valley's history and the facilities and resources available for them there. Children demonstrate their skills for work well. For example, they carved well-finished oak signs illustrating the village features in French. Information and communications technology is used well across learning. Staff should continue their very strong work

to develop further the forest school experiences enabling all children to learn through exciting outdoor contexts.

Children are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy. Raising attainment is and has been a very clear focus for the school. Almost all children are very good at expressing their ideas and explaining their learning to others. They participate in discussions well, expressing their ideas with confidence. They listen well to each other. Almost all children are interested in reading as a result of the school's strong reading initiatives. The use of 'Everyone Reads In Class' (ERIC) time is benefiting everyone and in particular those few learners who don't have a tradition of reading outside of school. Writing across the school is of a high standard. Children write well for a wide variety of purposes, often linked to other areas of their class work. Their skills in numeracy are progressing well. By P2, children are developing their understanding of money. By the middle stages, they can tell the time confidently using a digital clock. By P7, children can talk with knowledge and understanding about using their numeracy skills in real life situations. We have asked staff to continue with their plans to improve children's numeracy further. Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They recognise the need for regular physical activity such as participating in the 'kilometre club' to support different aspects of their health. French language skills are developing well across the school and children are achieving success in developing their vocabulary through their work completing a French learning walk around the village. We have asked staff to develop further monitoring and tracking of all subjects to support continued improvement in attainment and achievement. Staff and children have put in place individual profiles and tracking systems to demonstrate children's achievements. The school should continue with its plans to develop these further demonstrating where children's strengths and skills are presently and where they need to develop achievements further.

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

Across the school, children benefit from a caring, respectful and nurturing environment. In almost all classes observed, teachers ensure that tasks and activities are brisk and very well matched to the needs of learners. Classroom teachers, support staff and outside agencies work very well with children who need additional help with their learning. They provide them with helpful and relevant support plans, and encourage them to participate in school clubs where appropriate. Across the school, children benefit from a rich and relevant curriculum that is based on Curriculum for Excellence principles and the school's vision to provide a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment for learning. The curriculum is designed to be inclusive and support all learners. Children are learning to apply a range of important thinking skills, such as problem-solving and leadership skills in a wide range of curriculum contexts. This includes the 'Farm to Fork' education programme in partnership with a local supermarket. Visiting specialists, school partners and many family helpers, enrich learning across the curriculum. Staff should continue to develop learning opportunities across subjects. This will allow children to develop their varied interests and needs in new stimulating ways. The curriculum is extended well through educational visits and trips. For example, P2/P3 enhanced learning in the classroom through a visit to the Owl Centre and they joined P5/P6 children in a topic related visit to Stirling Castle. Children are keen and enthusiastic to participate in a broad based science curriculum where they enjoy participating in valuable science experiments. Transition

arrangements for children moving from nursery to P1 and for those in P7 moving to Lanark Grammar are very effective.

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

The headteacher has established herself as a very effective leader who is passionate about trying to ensure that every child has the best life chances. She is very well respected by the school community including parents, staff and pupils. The school has benefited greatly from this quality of leadership. The headteacher is assisted, very ably, by a well-organised, enthusiastic, principal teacher and a highly motivated group of staff who share her vision. Parents, including the Parent and Friends Association (PFA), and the Parent Council are a very positive influence for improvement. Teachers work together very well to improve learning through developing and sharing new ideas together. The headteacher and principal teacher should continue their strong work to ensure that everyone in the school including the children are able to participate in valuable leadership activities. The school is very well-placed to continue to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Exceptionally polite, motivated children who are very proud of their school.
- A highly effective headteacher and strongly motivated staff team, including the principal teacher, who work very well together to improve the school.
- The stimulating learning environment for children including the forest school work.
- The strong commitment from parents, families and partners to support the work of the school.

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

- Continue to develop the curriculum to reflect Curriculum for Excellence.
- Develop further monitoring and tracking of children's progress to support attainment and achievement.

### **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, the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress.

Aileen Monaghan  
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/UnderbankPrimarySchoolSouthLanarkshire.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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