

Your Ref:

Education Services

Our Ref: DISTRICT\INFO\QI INDICES\ES\REPORTS\
NITHSDALE\ST MICHAEL'S PS\LET001-CG\EB\RL

Woodbank

30 Edinburgh Road

3 November 2015

Dumfries DG1 1NW

To:

Any enquiries please contact

**All Parents and Carers of Pupils at
St Michael's Primary School**

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Dear Parent / Carer

LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF ST MICHAEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL SINCE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF AUGUST 2014

St Michael's Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland in May 2014. The inspection focussed on: 1) How well children learn and achieve; 2) How well the school supports children to develop and learn and 3) How well the school improves the quality of its work. Education Scotland awarded St Michael's School an evaluation of 'Excellent' for learners' experiences, meeting learners' needs and self-evaluation. Improvements in performance and the curriculum were awarded an evaluation of 'Very Good'.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by the school since the publication of the Education Scotland report in August 2014. The report highlighted one aspect for development. This letter sets out actions taken by the school in addressing this.

Continue to implement the priorities set out in the school's very well-judged improvement plan.

Over the last year, all members of the school community have continued to work hard to ensure that St Michael's Primary School continues to be creative and innovative in taking forward Curriculum for Excellence. Focus was maintained on encouraging and supporting all learners to work towards and achieve success in all that they do.

Building on the school's very effective arrangements for planning and reviewing children's learning, staff have worked together, discussing and sharing ideas to further develop manageable approaches through the 'Significant Aspects of Learning' (June 2014) for moderating, assessing and tracking coherence, progression and depth in learning for all pupils. This agreed common approach to assessment, tracking and monitoring across the

school informs progress of individual pupils, self-evaluation and is incorporated in school planning. The next step will be to replicate this work within the area of Modern Languages, incorporating the recently introduced additional Experiences and Outcomes.

The school has been successful in embedding and building upon its recently developed approaches to recording and accrediting children's skills development and achievements throughout their Primary years. The school's SKILL Awards scheme provides support for independent and motivated learners through a challenging and varied 7-year Wider Achievement Programme which is linked to each of the 4 capacities and takes account of learning in and out with school. Pupils are able to engage in high quality learning experiences which increase engagement and improve motivation for all learners. This work has been shared at both local and national level and is soon to be published on Education Scotland's website as a model of good practice. Next steps have been identified to deliver progression in pupils' learning through into secondary education.

Pupils continue to engage with the high standards and expectations outlined within all areas of the curriculum. They are actively involved in setting specific individual targets/goals to improve their learning. However, to further engage learners in the language of learning, staff used the children's understanding of learning intentions and expectations to enable them to be more evaluative in their success criteria. Working together with staff, the children created helpful 'Prompt Cards', differentiated within the CfE Levels, to support and enhance pupil self-evaluation, thus allowing the children to be more reflective when providing feedback on their learning journey. The 'My Journey' booklets and pupil support materials such as the 'Prompt Cards' have been shared at both local and national level with the staff working alongside a number of schools throughout Scotland who have chosen to adopt this approach.

In line with the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence at St Michael's Primary School and Scottish Government's advice, the school reviewed its approaches to reporting to parents/carers, which led to the trial of a new structure of formal reporting for pupils in Primary 1 and Primary 2. A format which supports a new approach to reporting, involving Learning Conversations - supported by a Summary of Progression document was created and agreed by relevant stakeholders. Through the introduction of Learning Conversations, pupils and parents are able to engage in good quality discussions with teachers that are personal and specific to the child's learning. The associated paperwork supports this approach, identifying a pupil's strengths and development needs, whilst at the same time helping parents to understand how they can support their children to develop their learning further. The learners themselves are encouraged to contribute to this discussion about their progress in learning and to contribute to the planning of next steps. A focused working group involving learners, teachers and parents/carers was formed after the first round of Learning Conversations in November 2014 to seek views and opinions from all stakeholders to establish if this is a more meaningful way to report on and recognise pupil successes, progress and next steps in learning. The school's self-evaluation of this model identified that this open channel of communication in reporting the child's progress to parents has been viewed positively. Parents/carers feel they have a far greater involvement in their child's personal learning planning and are supported and encouraged to be involved in their child's learning and progress.

The Scottish Government's policy, 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach', is aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn a modern language from P1 onwards, followed by the introduction of a second language in P5. To begin building capacity for the teaching of two languages in addition to English, the school has worked closely with its Cluster colleagues and the authority's Modern Languages Team, to conduct an audit of language provision. The findings were used to create a strategy for implementation in the school. All staff embraced the 1+2 Agenda and welcomed

continuous support, provided throughout the year, to develop the necessary high level of staff confidence in teaching a model, which helps to integrate modern languages into everyday classroom situations. The school is now able to demonstrate initial progress towards continuous language learning in French from P1 – P7, with plans for the introduction of Spanish from P5 in 2015-16. The next step will be to continue to increase staff confidence in the delivery of French/Spanish. This will further support pupils' learning in this area of the curriculum.

The school's approaches to education for sustainable development, enterprise and citizenship remain strong. A clear strategy is embedded in the curriculum and ensures that all learners receive their entitlement to sustainable education. Having adopted a whole school approach which is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels, all teachers, in line with GTCS Professional Standards, have been able to demonstrate Learning for Sustainability in their practice. It is evident through their engagement in a wide range of innovative activities, professional dialogue and team work, levels of staff confidence in Global/Sustainability Education has increased. Engagement in 'National Digital Learning Week' allowed the school to share innovative and exciting ways in which technologies are being used to support learning and teaching in classrooms the length and breadth of Scotland and St Michael's were proud to be selected as the first school in Scotland to begin the 'Live Story Blog' following on from Scottish author, Cathy MacPhail. This good practice is supported by staff involved in strategic development at school, cluster, authority and national level, with the school's achievements being showcased at a number of regional and national events.

A strategic cluster approach to support work on improving levels of attendance for Looked After Children and Young People was agreed and drawn up in consultation with the Cluster's Attendance Liaison Officer. This provided the school with support in monitoring attendance and time keeping and put in place effective interventions to raise pupils' levels of attendance, including working with a wide range of support agencies. Assessments carried out at the end of the year clearly evidenced that those pupils whose attendance levels had noticeably improved had increased levels of attainment, achievement and participation. The school's exemplary arrangements for monitoring and tracking Looked After Children's progress and supporting their learning as identified in the Inspection Report were shared at cluster level and shall be shared at national level later this year. Additionally, as a result of the sector leading work the school has been carrying out to ensure that all young people who require additional support are making substantial progress with their individualised learning targets, it has recently featured as a case study in the Scottish Government Report to Parliament 2014 - Implementation of The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended). Working with parents and families, the school now plans to launch an 'Every Day Counts' campaign to further support improved levels of attendance.

In conclusion, the high level of staff commitment - and effective leadership at all levels across the school, has ensured excellent progress has been made in addressing the HMI recommendation. The school continues to have a very significant capacity for improvement and it is clearly evident that the teamwork of all staff continues to be exemplary and is focused on delivering the highest quality of learning experiences for all young children.

Yours sincerely

Colin Grant
Director of Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning