



## Perth and Kinross Council Education and Children's Services



### Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report Arngask Primary School 2 and 3 December 2014

## BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, three Quality Improvement Officers from Education and Children's Services visited Arngask Primary School on 2 and 3 December 2014. The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership. These themes were subject to scrutiny through core Quality Indicators from *How good is our school?* and by using the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note. It outlines the raised expectations in relation to all schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the time of the visit Arngask Primary School had a pupil roll of 83 children, organised in four composite classes, and a Nursery class with 10 places each morning and afternoon. The headteacher, who has no class teaching commitment this session, is supported by two part-time principal teachers.

## ACHIEVEMENT

Since the Learning and Achievement Visit in February 2014 the school has revised their system for tracking attainment and children's progress in learning. The information provided by the school is that at each level, when reviewed against national expectations, most children are making appropriate progress in listening and talking, reading and writing, with the majority making appropriate progress in mathematics. This session the school has had a focus on raising attainment in numeracy and mathematics and needs now to systematically gather evidence of improvement.

In scheduled Planning and Tracking meetings, children's progress in learning is reviewed by the class teacher and headteacher to consider pace and identify concerns; for some children informal predictions of attainment are also recorded at that time. This process should now be further developed to include agreed action points for class teachers and headteacher, with appropriate time-scales for implementation, to ensure appropriate pace of progress in learning for all children.

This session has seen staff begin to engage with the Perth and Kinross Indicators as a tool to track progress in learning for each individual child within the relevant curriculum level. Building on this, there is now a need to prioritise consistent use of the Indicators across the school to inform teacher judgement about secure attainment and influence planned learning.

Led by the P1/2 class teacher, a Learning Journey Jotter (LJJ) approach is now in place for every child P1-P7. In the best examples seen, children have selected pieces of work and photographs of activities that demonstrate their progress in learning. These are presented with care and children have written about their learning with confidence and pride. Parents consulted said that they value

the information contained in the LJJ, and the opportunity to comment on and praise their child's progress in learning. However staff have identified the need to revise the process to better meet the needs of children at different stages and to improve the quality of these jotters.

Children in Arngask report that they feel safe, that children look out for each other in the playground and that there are adults who can help them when that is required. Because of the num-

bers in the school, children know each other well and have a sense of belonging to a defined school community – “it’s like we are a family”. They are happy to come to school.

## **LEARNING**

Children in the Nursery are benefitting from rich learning experiences which are relevant, active and experiential. They are well supported by staff who know them well and who plan effectively for next steps in learning. The children observed played and worked together co-operatively, sharing, helping and supporting each other in their learning. They could talk confidently about their learning profiles and the models they were making in the construction area. Opportunities for the development of numeracy skills were being maximised; for example, the Christmas Advent Calendar allowed children to practice and apply their skills in counting and identifying numbers which came before and after. Routines have been well established and relationships were warm and encouraging.

In the early years all children have benefitted from a sustained teaching focus on developing secure knowledge and understanding in numeracy together with opportunities to apply that knowledge in a range of activities. In P1/2 children observed demonstrated an emerging awareness of skills for learning and all agreed that they do try their best in class and that their teachers help them in their learning.

The importance of establishing a consistent approach to the use of Learning Intentions (LIs) and Success Criteria (SC) in classes, identified in previous school improvement visits over the past two years, remains to be addressed as a key element in ensuring that the effectiveness of teaching and learning in Arngask is maximised.

During our visit, children from the younger classes talked confidently about Learning Intentions. They understood that Learning Intentions told them what they were aiming to achieve in their learning. They were less confident in their understanding of Success Criteria although some were able to link these to the Learning Intentions. Children in the upper stages were not confident to talk about the specific learning in their activities or the criteria for success and would benefit from revisiting the purpose of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria.

This session the school is engaged in the Tapestry Teaching and Learning Community (TLC) project which provides professional development sessions for teachers aimed at improving learning and teaching approaches. As this training impacts on the practice of all staff in school we would expect to see a more consistent experience for children as they move through the school, and a positive impact on attainment.

In all lessons observed, children were treated fairly and respectfully by staff members. In the majority of lessons explanations and instructions were clear and to some extent built on previous

learning and real life experiences. In the best of lessons observed children’s responses were valued, encouraged and built upon, learning intentions were appropriate, shared effectively, understood by the children and referred to throughout the lesson; here too differentiation of task and activities was evident, questioning was used effectively and there were high expectations for all learners. It is our expectation that Tapestry TLC professional development opportunities will enable that good practice to be shared across the school.

Community links have enhanced the curriculum offered to children, and their sense of belonging to the village of Glenfarg. Over the past two years links with Glenfarg Film Club have given P6 and P7 children experience in writing scripts, acting out their plays, filming and editing their productions. As a result of close partnership with the local minister, plans are in place for the local church and senior pupils to work together on a World War I memorial in the church hall. Over the year,

most classes benefit from input in Scottish Country Dancing from a member of the local community. Across the school, children recently enjoyed the opportunities, provided by their Christmas Fayre, to design, make and sell seasonal items to family and friends from the local area.

However, school staff have recognised the need to review their curriculum and are currently engaged in agreeing a draft curriculum rationale for Arngask Primary. Whilst children in the nursery have opportunities to engage in a range of indoor and outdoor experiences, outdoor learning has not featured strongly in the curriculum offered in other classes. The occasional trips and outings that are provided are highly valued by the children involved and by parents consulted; staff recognise that opportunities to learn outwith the classroom should now be extended and more use made of the real life learning environments readily available in the village and local community in the remaining terms of this session.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Pupil Voice Groups, led by P6 and P7 children with representatives from all stages P1-P7, have recently been established in Arngask to provide all children with opportunities to develop as responsible citizens and effective contributors. P6 and P7 children involved report that although they have encountered some challenges in leading these groups, they know they are learning leadership skills which will be helpful to them in their future lives.

Parents appreciate the regular school newsletters, which are informative and include contributions by children. These are emailed out and are uploaded onto the recently redesigned school website which is a useful reference point for children and their families. Parents consulted value the Learning Trees, and additional weekly and monthly communications from some classes, which enable them to support their child's learning. Parent events, such as the launch of the Learning Journey Jotters, have been well received as efforts to engage them as partners. Extending the opportunity to become a parent helper to all parents across the school would also be welcomed.

## **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Arngask will see several more staffing changes at the start of 2015. It is now both appropriate and necessary for the school to refocus on establishing effective teaching and learning for all children. A detailed action plan has been drawn up to support the school's headteacher in leading the implementation of the required improvements within the stated timescales.

The specific areas for improvement at Arngask Primary at this time are as follows:-

1. By March 2015 review and rationalise the processes already in place at Arngask, to plan for, track, evidence and predict attainment, and ensure these processes impact positively on learning in literacy and language, numeracy and mathematics, and health and wellbeing for all children.
2. Develop the draft curriculum rationale, by April 2015, to ensure that all children access a range of high quality, planned learning experiences at an appropriate level, across all four contexts of the curriculum, including learning outwith the school building, in the local environment and beyond.
3. By June 2015, in relation to the developments of the Tapestry TLC project, i) establish shared understanding by all teachers of the key components of effective learning and teaching and ii) improve consistency of experience for children across all classes.

## Conclusion

Children in Arngask Primary impressed as happy, polite and articulate, confident to welcome visitors and talk with adults. All were very well behaved and generally engaged willingly in the tasks set for them. Children consulted were able to offer reasoned opinions and to express preferences.

The headteacher and staff understand the importance of delivering teaching and learning which enables all children to achieve their full potential, and the need to ensure continuous improvement. With the support of local authority officers, and a detailed action plan which will supersede the School Improvement Plan, the headteacher and the staff will now work together to develop systematic approaches which address the areas for development identified in this report, within the timescales identified in the action plan.

Authority officers will visit the school in May 2015 to review the progress made in the areas for development identified in this report. Their findings will then be included in the school's Standards and Qualities Report June 2015 and will inform the Arngask School Improvement Plan for 201516.

### [HMI Report](#)

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