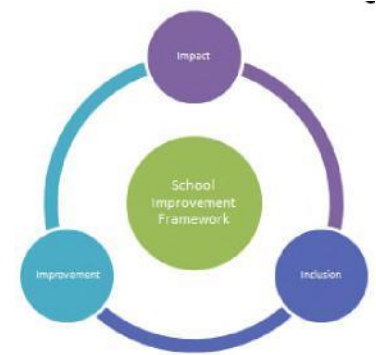




**Perth and Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services
Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report
Alyth Primary School
8 & 9 February 2017**



BACKGROUND

The purpose of this visit was to support the school in the process of self-evaluation. It was conducted by Officers from Education and Children's Services (E.C.S.). The themes subject to scrutiny were based on core Quality Indicators from 'How good is our school?' (4th edition) and reflected the most recent advice note from Education Scotland which outlines raised expectations in relation to schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the time of the visit Alyth Primary School had a pupil roll of 186 organised across eight classes and a nursery with a total of 35 children across the morning and afternoon sessions. The school is led by a Senior Management Team (SMT) of a headteacher and a deputy headteacher.

The school has an attendance level of 94.8% which is below the Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) average of 95.3%. The school has plans in place to improve attendance, including liaising with parents and identifying support for children where that is appropriate.

Information was gathered from visits to classes, scrutiny of data, records and children's work, discussions with children, parents, staff and displays of children's work around the school.

ACHIEVEMENT

Children at Alyth Primary are well mannered and polite and are very proud of their school. They enjoy a positive ethos and nurturing environment and reported that they felt safe, were listened to by staff and could get help when they needed it.

Attainment data shows that at Primary 1 all children are making very good progress in terms of national expectations in literacy and numeracy. At Primary 4 most children are making very good progress in listening and talking and writing and almost all are making very good progress in reading and maths. At Primary 7 almost all children are making very good progress in listening and talking and most are making very good progress in reading, writing and maths.

The school is now using the Perth & Kinross system to track and monitor pupil attainment over time in listening and talking, reading, writing and maths. SMT and teaching staff report that it is proving to be a useful tool for analysis of pupil progress against predicted targets. It provides a focus for teachers to engage in discussions with the SMT about the attainment levels and progress of children in their class. This challenging dialogue is leading to early identification of barriers to learning and effective and targeted approaches for individuals. The school has also been using Perth and Kinross Indicators, which describe what achievement at each level may look like, to inform judgments on pupil progress which have proved very helpful in discussions around attainment.

Current systems for assessing writing across the school are effective and show progression in learning. Building on existing good practice in teacher use of the assessment criteria, the

school should further develop the use of the child friendly criterion to fully involve learners in identifying their next steps.

Whole school use of the wellbeing indicators has had a positive impact on learners. Work undertaken in classes has benefited all children who can confidently speak about the language of SHANARRI and how this is relevant in their lives. Children designed a SHANARRI family and the winning designs are currently being created into a visual child friendly logo that will further develop children's engagement with their wellbeing. Parents reported that they had a level of understanding of wellbeing through their children talking about it at home.

LEARNING

During this period of transition while waiting for completion of the new school build, the school is making best use of the current environment for learning.

In all the learning episodes observed learning intentions were shared with children. In most lessons success criteria were shared and revisited with learners; explanations and instructions were clear and built on previous learning and real life experiences and careful questioning by the teacher was effective in extending learning. In the best lessons observed, children's learning was enhanced through a variety of effective strategies such as cooperative learning. Most learning is well planned and sustains motivation and attention. In most lessons observed learners were treated with equality, fairness and respect with their responses valued, encouraged and built upon. In the majority of lessons differentiation, support and challenge were evident and maximised learners' progress. Across the school most children engaged well in their learning activities.

As part of their leadership role some teachers were focusing on self-regulation as part of a programme of action research supported by Education Psychologist Services. These teachers reported a positive impact and during our visit it was evident that the children were benefiting from this and were using the associated language such as 'Big Deal, Little Deal' to help problem solve.

The school offers a variety of events to encourage parents to engage in their children's learning such as the Story Box community project and in the nursery parental engagement is supported by initiatives such as Blether Bags/Brunch and Blether, and Stay and Play which is particularly well attended. New resources to support literacy are supporting more consistency and progression. Staff report that as a result learners are more engaged in their learning.

All teachers are beginning to work with learners to ensure that, as part of the school's "Visible Curriculum," intended learning is clear, shared and linked across the four areas of the curriculum. This is achieved through planning experiences and outcomes with the pupils and sharing learning with home via the termly information leaflet. Children's learning is applied in different contexts and children are beginning to make connections between learning at school and the world of work. This should now be reviewed to ensure a progressive system across the whole school which allows learners the opportunity to engage more regularly in dialogue and reflection as part of their daily routine.

Children's additional support needs are identified effectively across the school and teachers work closely with the pupil support teacher to meet pupils' needs. As planned, the school should provide further training to ensure teaching staff are more engaged in the process of planning for children with additional support needs.

In the nursery children feel valued and are motivated and engaged by their learning experiences. Practitioners use floor books effectively with children to discuss and plan their learning and planned experiences are recorded on "Our Learning Wall". There is now scope to develop this into a more interactive three dimensional area with opportunities for children to visualise their learning.

Learning observations are made and recorded with photographic evidence in the pupil profiles. Nursery staff should now plan next steps in learning with children and record in profiles to ensure these are appropriately planned to secure children's progress in learning.

LEADERSHIP

The headteacher and depute headteacher work well together as a team. The staff team is committed and motivated and work collegiately together. Teachers' engagement with research has impacted on practice, for example the introduction of self-regulation.

The SMT meets regularly with the Pupil Council and Eco Committee, discussing progress and seeking their views. The children in these groups are articulate and talk with pride about their school and the impact that their participation and leadership in these groups is making to their school experience. They stated that pupil views were taken on board. They reported that each class could bring forward ideas to the Pupil Council and "sensible things get made into a reality".

Self-evaluation and quality assurance approaches provide information to guide school improvement planning. The school has identified the need to consult more widely across stakeholders to ensure robust data collection that informs practice and impacts on learners.

Parents reported that they were welcomed into the school and they appreciated the open door policy and the warm, positive ethos. The majority of parents confirmed that the school used a wide variety of ways to communicate learning and information. They valued the opportunity to find out more about their children's learning through 'Showcase the Learning' and 'Meet the Teacher' events. Some parents felt that there was scope to improve links with the community particularly to develop the world of work and, as planned, Parent Council members were keen to work together with the school to progress this.

The motivated staff team are now ready to further develop their leadership and participate in leading and evaluating school improvement to ensure consistent approaches across the school.

CONCLUSION

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 Education officers, the headteacher and the staff will now work together to address the areas for improvement identified in this report, within the timescales.

Strengths:

- Polite, well-mannered children who are proud of their school

- The leadership of the headteacher, which empowers the motivated staff team to contribute to aspects of school improvement
- Relevant links made to the world of work through inter disciplinary learning
- Strong emphasis on the importance of health and wellbeing in learning and teaching
- Current systems for assessing writing across the school are effective and demonstrate Progression in learning
- More rigorous dialogue between SMT and staff leading to improvements in learners' attainment

We discussed with the Headteacher and staff how they might continue to improve the school through their self-evaluation and feedback from the Extended Learning and Achievement Visit team. The following areas for improvement were agreed:

- During session 2017-18 develop whole school approaches to involving children in their learning through consistent application of use of Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and feedback connected to this. Ensure intended learning is clear, shared and linked across the four areas of the curriculum.
- During session 2017-18 develop effective learning and teaching strategies across the school to ensure differentiation further meets the needs of all learners, building on and sharing the identified good practice to further develop learner engagement across all stages.
- By October 2017 further develop the learning wall in the nursery to create further opportunities for children to visualise and engage with their next steps in learning.
- During session 2017-18 build on the motivation of staff to further develop leadership at all levels and formalise opportunities to share good practice to impact on school improvement.
- By August 2017 ensure self-evaluation processes include all stakeholders to provide robust information that guides school improvement.
- By August 2017, as planned, provide further staff training to enhance the existing strengths in supporting children with additional support needs.

Education officers will visit the school again within a year of the publication of this report to validate the school's own report on how well it has taken forward the main areas for improvement.

[HMI Report 2006](#)

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