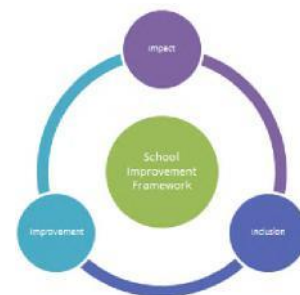




## Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report Balbeggie Primary School 6 and 7 September 2016



### BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers from across Education and Children's Services (ECS) visited Balbeggie Primary School and nursery class on 6 and 7 September 2016. 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? (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)* 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 visit Balbeggie, had a pupil roll of 51 organised in 3 composite classes. The nursery class had capacity for 20 morning and 20 afternoon places. The school is led by the headteacher (HT) who is supported by a Principal Teacher (PT). The HT leads Balbeggie as part of a shared headship with Collace Primary School.

The school has an attendance level of 97.94% which is above the Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) and national average.

Information was gathered from class visits, scrutiny of data and evidence of children's learning, discussions with children, parents/carers and staff, and displays of children's work around the school.

### ACHIEVEMENT

Children at Balbeggie are learning in a purposeful and organised environment within which they feel safe and cared for. They impress as happy, well behaved and positive towards their learning. Children are confident that their opinions and contributions are listened to and acted upon. They are able to describe the benefits of being in an inclusive school where everyone looks out for each other.

The school has improved standards of attainment in recent years. Most children are currently making good progress, in line with national expectations, in mathematics, listening and talking, reading and writing. A few children exceed national expectations across the stages. Overall, this is a continuously improving trend which the school predicts will be sustained for June 2017.

The school has developed effective approaches to tracking and monitoring children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Assessment information is collated and interrogated to give a clear picture of attainment at year group, class and individual levels. The HT and PT meet termly with staff to discuss children's progress, identify areas for further improvement and target support.

Across the school almost all children can listen attentively and can talk very confidently and articulately, with each other and with adults. Almost all collaborate very well with each other when learning in pairs and small groups.

Writing continues to be an area for focus and improvement. Staff are working together to finalise the school's pathways for learning in Literacy which will ensure structure and progression for Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking. This development work includes the

use of the Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) Indicators and the National Benchmarks for Literacy. The school team has prioritised raising teachers' expectations and standards of the quality and presentation of writing at all stages and across all curriculum areas. There should now be an increased focus on the moderation of standards and expectation at school level and with colleagues from other schools.

Children are developing an understanding of their own health and wellbeing. There is scope to further develop approaches to ensuring that children and their families understand, and use, the language associated with the GIRFEC Wellbeing Indicators. Children in all classes participate in the Daily mile. Children can describe the benefits of regular exercise and are making connections from this to healthy lifestyles and wellbeing. Staff report increased levels of concentration, motivation and engagement of children since introducing this daily routine.

Children talk proudly about the work that they are involved in to improve their school and contribute to their community. Successful initiatives which are very well supported by local businesses and community partnerships include equipping and maintaining the school's poly tunnel which is very well used by all classes. Local residents have also supported children's learning about World Wars 1 and 2, sharing their experiences and running interactive activities.

Children are also extremely positive about the range of opportunities they have to develop their interests and talents through sports, competitions and performances. The school is monitoring levels of children's participation in activities provided by staff, Active Schools and parents in and out with school. Children are currently being consulted about the range of activities for this session and plans are in place to introduce a French club for children and parents using the expertise of a French Language Assistant.

## **LEARNING**

Children in Balbeggie have access to a variety of play areas in the school grounds which support creative play and outdoor learning very well, particularly in the nursery. Children's work is displayed throughout the school; this is most effective where displays make clear how children's ideas and creativity have been used, for example, the P6/7 WW1 display which includes children's suggestions and contributions and the use of children's writing and art work to reinforce key learning points. In all classes children should be more involved in creating and annotating displays to ensure high quality evidence of their learning.

Staff know children very well. Target setting and profiling is developing across the school starting in nursery. The school team have used feedback from children and their own evaluations to evolve profiling processes. Children find this process most helpful when they are able to evaluate their progress in learning regularly with each other and with staff. The school should continue to support children to identify the skills they have developed and be able to explain what skills they require to improve when setting their targets and adding to their profiles. The PKC Skills Framework will be an important resource for this work as will ensuring that staff provide high quality written feedback for children across all curricular areas.

Learning activities are well planned and carefully structured. The majority of learning intentions are clear and in some classes children are involved in setting their success criteria. The level of support is appropriate and activities are differentiated to meet the range of children's learning needs and abilities. Staff are responsive to children's needs and judge well when to extend or shorten learning sessions. The schools team are well placed to evaluate how well children are challenged in learning across the curriculum.

Staff are working together to develop pathways for learning for all curricular areas. In tandem with whole school topics such as the Food Bus and the Olympics this is enabling staff to develop better continuity and progression in learning across all stages.

Children have many opportunities to learn and work with their peers in larger groups from across the authority. Children and parents appreciate the range of topic related excursions that are arranged to enhance and enrich learning throughout the year.

Teachers and support staff work well together to provide well-judged assistance for children. Relationships between staff and children are very positive, helpful and respectful. There are effective systems in place to ensure joined up and consistent approaches between those staff supporting children with additional needs. The school team access the expertise of the Pupil Support Teacher on a consultative basis and use this support effectively. There is scope to increase the contributions of support staff to ongoing evaluations of children's progress and review meetings.

Approaches to learning in the nursery are active and creative. Nursery to P1 transition should now be developed further to ensure the P1 curriculum and classroom enable children to extend the skills acquired in nursery.

The school has identified the need to ensure children and parents understand the curriculum rationale of high aspiration and ambition for all children to have a sense of community and be equipped with the skills they need to be successful throughout school and beyond. The school's Rainbow logo could serve as a very helpful graphic for the curriculum rationale. They plan to expand their community links and business partnerships to enhance children's experiences across the curriculum. As part of this work, the school should ensure that contexts for learning reflect the curriculum rationale and the uniqueness of the school and its community.

Parents consulted feel that the school communicates very well with them. They are provided with regular information on school events and on what their children will be learning in class. They would appreciate the information that is sent home to include more suggestions as to how they can support learning at home. Parents are also positive about the school's efforts to vary the times of events to suit different families and the range of invitations and opportunities they have to use their own skills, talents and interests to enrich children's learning experiences. They commend the school team for their shared responsibility for all children and the value all staff place on having good relationships and regular contact with parents.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The headteacher has successfully led the development of a range of self-evaluation processes which is clearly leading to improvement. She and the PT know the school very well and have a clear sense of direction for Balbeggie. Staff and parents appreciate the visible and supportive leadership of the SMT.

Staff work well together and have sustained an ethos of improvement throughout a period of significant change within the team. Teachers are reflective about their own classroom practice and contribute effectively to school improvement planning and evaluation. They are proactive in their approaches to professional learning, for example the two teachers in P1 use their non-class contact time to observe each other to ensure continuity and quality of learning experiences for children.

In partnership with the SMT, teachers are involved in a number of monitoring activities throughout the year to check on standards. These include individual and group discussions with children about their learning and a programme of formal and planned observations of learning and teaching. The HT collates the key areas of strength and areas for improvement from class visits for discussion with all staff so that effective practice can be shared and areas for development are prioritised.

The staff team are well placed to use their individual and collective skills and expertise to increase their leadership roles in driving forward school improvement following the example of the teacher led development of skills for learning, life and work. As part of this initiative there should be a focus on increasing children's involvement in recruiting and selecting to school groups and committees.

The impact of the staff's commitment to improvement through self-evaluation is evident through the developing approaches to curricular planning and assessment. Systems to predict, track and monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy are effective. Work is underway to extend this approach to health and wellbeing, social studies and then other curricular areas.

Children across the school appreciate the opportunities they have to develop their leadership skills and attributes. They talk enthusiastically about their organisation of events for parents and the community such as class assemblies. Older children are also able to explain their roles and responsibilities for running school clubs. They appreciate being able to suggest and choose what clubs will be each year. The school is already planning to increase children's involvement in planning and evaluating school improvement priorities.

## **Strengths**

- The very well behaved, articulate children who learn well together.
- The evident shared responsibility of all staff in providing a positive and inclusive ethos across school.
- The school's use of assessment information to track, monitor and evaluate children's progress in learning as they move through school.
- The development of the outdoor environment as a context for learning;
- The headteacher's leadership and the effective support of the PT in enabling a culture of continuous improvement;

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

- From November 2016 work to ensure parents, children and partners understand the curriculum rationale and increase their involvement in planning and evaluating curriculum developments;
- Continue to develop school improvement leadership roles of staff members;
- Further develop planned and progressive opportunities for all children to lead learning, developing skills for learning, life and work by May 2017;
- By May 2017 extend the new approaches for tracking progress to all aspects of the broad general education with an initial focus on health and wellbeing taking cognisance of recent national guidance.

## **Conclusion**

Balbeggie is a well led school where children are making good progress in their learning. The staff team's collective approach to ensuring the attainment, achievement and wellbeing of all children creates an environment where children feel safe, respected and happy.

As part of the normal ELAV follow up procedures, ECS officers will return within a year to evaluate the school's progress towards taking forward the recommendations for improvement.

[HMI Report 2006](#)

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