



PERTH and KINROSS COUNCIL
Education and Children's Services
Extended Learning and Achievement Visit
Blackford Primary School
12/13 May 2010



BACKGROUND

To assist the school in the process of self evaluation, a team of two Service managers from Education and Children's Services visited Blackford Primary School on 12/13 May 2010. The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership. These themes were subject to scrutiny through Quality Indicators from *How good is our school?*

Prior to the visit the headteacher submitted a self-evaluation undertaken by the school. This together with the School Report 2008-2009 and the School Improvement Plan 2009-2010 formed the core documentation for the visit.

During the Extended Learning and Achievement Visit, the team carried out discussions with the headteacher, classroom observations, reviewed documentation and met with groups of pupils and parents.

The strengths and areas for development identified as a result of the self-evaluation process are recorded below under the three main themes of Achievement, Learning and Leadership.

ACHIEVEMENT

Strengths

- Most pupils are attaining in line with national standards for reading, writing and mathematics. Currently a few are achieving these earlier, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils are happy in school and have a positive educational experience.
- Most pupils are polite, confident and demonstrate respect for others.
- Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of cultural and sporting activities both within the school and as part of authority events.
- Learners experience success and are confident in their learning through a range of opportunities such as the Pupil Council, ECO Committee, Health Committee, Junior Road and Rail Safety Officers and the School Website Committee.
- There are opportunities to celebrate pupils' wider achievements through personal learning plans and at weekly assemblies.
- The school takes part in local management group activities to develop learning and teaching approaches through, for example, the Accelerated Reading Programme.
- Work has been undertaken in the school environment to develop the school grounds to provide opportunities for outdoor learning.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that robust procedures are in place to track pupil attainment ensuring a particular focus on the expectations and pace of learning for each pupil.
- Ensure that teachers' planning and assessment reflects a focus on the development and progression of skills, knowledge and understanding as expressed in the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and less on progress through resource based learning.
- Continue to work towards achieving the Perth and Kinross Standard 'Improving Health, Improving Learning'.
- Continue towards achieving the ECO Schools Green Flag Award.
- Priorities for development in the school improvement plan should be based on evidence from the school self evaluation process, and should indicate specific actions to be undertaken by the school, for example, 'Develop high quality opportunities for play at the early stages'.

LEARNING

Strengths

- Most children are well motivated and actively engaged in their learning.
- In the best lessons observed there was a clear structure, and teachers shared with children what they were going to learn.
- When given the opportunity, children work well in group activities.
- Children are increasingly involved in planning their class theme and identifying areas for investigation.
- Classes make good use of the school grounds and local environment to enhance learning, including the recently introduced Forest Schools programme.
- Children are treated fairly and respectfully.
- Interactions between staff and pupils are positive.
- IEPs take account of children's needs and identify next steps in learning. Parents are involved appropriately in the process.
- There is a range of appropriate policies and procedures in relation to Child Protection.
- Parents feel the school is very proactive and supportive if there are particular concerns about their children's learning.

Areas for Improvement

- Continue to develop planning to link areas of learning to provide opportunities across learning for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and to provide purposeful and relevant contexts.
- Continue to develop active learning approaches such as learning through play at the early stages, and through building on the beginnings of co-operative learning.
- Review practice in AifL to ensure that there is a consistent approach, particularly in relation to the effective use of success criteria to provide effective oral and written feedback by teachers and in peer and self – evaluation.
- Ensure that tasks and activities are sufficiently challenging and planned to meet the needs, abilities and interests of all children.
- At all stages formal assessments of children's progress should be undertaken when learners are ready and have demonstrated sufficient progress.

- Careful consideration should be given to the roles of support staff in order to ensure that support is more effectively planned within all classes.
- In order to ensure consistency across all stages, a more rigorous approach to monitoring learning and teaching should be taken which results in identified targets to impact on the quality of learning and teaching.
- Seek opportunities for staff to work with colleagues in other schools to provide a wider forum for discussion of new developments and practice.

LEADERSHIP

Strengths

- The headteacher has a very good reputation within the local community and is held in high regard by parents.
- Staff are encouraged to take lead roles within and beyond the classroom.
- Staff work well together as a team and their approach is consultative and collegiate.
- Parents acknowledge the welcoming atmosphere in the school and the fact that the headteacher and staff are very approachable and know the children and their families very well.
- Children are encouraged to demonstrate responsibility through their participation in various committees.
- Parents are supportive of the school.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that there is a shared understanding of the vision for Curriculum for Excellence and that there is a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of staff in the steps to be taken to implement effective change.
- Review monitoring procedures to ensure that expectations and targets are discussed, understood and agreed by all.
- Establish systematic approaches to self-evaluation linked to improvement planning which involve everyone in the school community.
- Continue to develop opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning.

CONCLUSION

Blackford Primary is a school with a hard working and committed staff, where children are happy and where most attain national standards. The new headteacher, staff and parents should work together to build on the work already established and take forward more quickly the change and improvement agenda. Through further development of effective teamwork within the new team, the school will be well placed to ensure that the areas for improvement can be met, enabling every child to achieve their full potential.

With support from the authority, the school should now develop and implement a school improvement plan to take account of the areas for improvement indicated.