

19 May 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Dunning Primary School
Perth and Kinross Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including children's involvement in celebrating achievements and how children who need additional help with their learning are supported. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Almost all children have very positive experiences when learning and achieving in and beyond the classroom. Children enjoy very caring and supportive relationships which results in them being happy, feeling respected and very keen to be successful. Children's views are listened to and acted upon through their involvement in a range of committees. For example, children on the committee which has a focus on celebrating achievements regularly make decisions in organising events for their peers. Children's learning has a clear focus on helping them to be confident. They show a high level of responsibility in group tasks, practical work and discussions based on relevant topics. Children are engrossed in situations in which they have to solve problems. This includes their learning of French being set round a mystery that involves translating French clues. In all of these situations, children ask each other challenging questions which extend their learning further. Children's experiences are strengthened further by activities outwith class such as clubs, visits and excursions. Some of these are in the local area and are supported effectively by partners such as the Woodland Trust.

Almost all children are making sound progress in literacy and numeracy. Children articulate their thinking and ideas well using a rich choice of vocabulary. They engage very naturally in conversation with adults. Almost all children are passionate about reading books both at home and in school. By P7, they are skilled at talking about authors' styles of writing. Children write well for a variety of purposes. However, we agreed with the school that staff would continue their focus on improving consistency in the quality of children's writing, including in spelling and handwriting. Children are increasing their use of mathematics and numeracy skills in everyday situations. For example, those in P4 and P5 were strengthening their knowledge of time with the use

of travel timetables. Across stages, children's skills in mental calculations are very good. In both literacy and numeracy, a few children are exceeding the expected levels for their stage. In the case of those in P7, staff are planning children's learning with local secondary schools. There is some room for improvement in children's achievements in literacy and numeracy at the middle stages. Children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing some specialised skills such as those connected to the 'Heart Start' programme.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

The school provides quality support to help children to develop and learn. The headteacher works closely with staff in checking children's progress. From this, they put in place necessary support to help children to achieve better in literacy and numeracy. Pupil Support Assistants are very effective in the way they lead sessions with groups of children. Overall, lessons are mainly well paced. For most of the time, tasks and activities are well matched to children's needs and provide them with appropriate levels of challenge in their learning. In a few lessons, higher-achieving children would benefit from more difficult activities in which they can lead and take more responsibility for their learning. At the early stages, there is a commendable focus on increasing the challenge when learning through play. The needs of the few children who need additional support in their learning are met very well. They are making good progress in their learning.

Staff are using guidance for Curriculum for Excellence well. They have improved the teaching programmes for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Themed projects are motivating and engaging children in linking and applying their learning across different subjects. Teachers also plan a focus on individual subjects to help ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. There is an emphasis on science with children engaging well with experiments. Children follow a programme for music which is enhanced with tuition in guitar and violin. Staff are increasing the rigour of assessment in literacy and numeracy. We have asked them to continue to develop a shared understanding of children's progress across all subject areas. Such an understanding would also help children, in discussion with staff, to be clearer on their next steps in learning. There are good links with early learning and childcare centres to help build on children's previous learning. A residential trip to Nethybridge is one of the many activities that help children feel prepared for going to secondary school.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

There are important strengths in the school's arrangements for improving the quality of its work. The headteacher and principal teacher are very effective as a team. All staff make a very valuable contribution to the school's successes. Key to this is how they use self-evaluation to take forward and deliver on projects in the school improvement plan. Staff discuss practice with other neighbouring primary schools. A teacher has led developments on numeracy across Perth and Kinross Council. Parents support the school well by raising funds to enhance children's learning. The Parent Council are informed about developments in school and their suggestions are sought for future actions. Commendably, teachers are working with the Parent Council to produce advice on how parents can support their children in all subjects. We are confident that Dunning Primary School has the capacity to continue to improve the quality of its work.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident, polite and articulate children who are keen to learn and achieve well.
- The contribution of all staff and parents in developing a caring and supportive school in which children benefit from a wide range of learning experiences.
- The arrangements for those who require additional support in their learning.
- The headteacher's leadership, supported by her very effective principal teacher, in taking forward school improvements.

We discussed with staff and Perth and Kinross Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to develop approaches to challenge children in their learning.
- Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure progression in all aspects of children's learning.
- Improve the discussions between staff and children so that they are clearer on their next steps in learning.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Perth and Kinross Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Joan C. Esson
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/DunningPrimarySchoolPerthandKinross.asp>

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