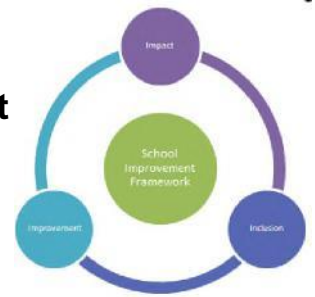




# Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report Letham Primary School 23 & 26 March 2018



## BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers and headteachers from Education and Children's Services (ECS) visited Letham Primary School on 23 and 26 April 2018. 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)*.

At the time of visit Letham Primary School had a pupil roll of 230 in the primary organised across 10 classes and 85 children registered in the nursery. The school is led by the headteacher who is supported by a deputy headteacher. The school has an attendance level of 94.1% which is above the Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) and national averages. 31% of children in the school have additional support needs.

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

At Letham Primary School there is a nurturing, supportive and caring environment for children and families. Almost all staff know children and families well. In almost all learning observed, there is evidence of positive and nurturing relationships between staff and children. The care and welfare of children and families is at the centre of the school's work. All children asked, said they feel safe and cared for in school and all confirm there is an adult to whom they can go and speak should they have any concerns.

Whilst there is a nurturing and supportive ethos across the school, children would benefit from all stakeholders having increased expectations and ambitions for what they can achieve, how they conduct themselves and the quality of their interactions. As discussed, the school should review their vision, values and aims, involving all children, staff and parents in this to ensure expectations are clear and shared.

Overall, children, including those requiring additional support, are not yet making appropriate progress in their learning. In June 2017 less than half of the children in Primary 1 and Primary 4 had achieved expected levels in line with national expectations in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy. In Primary 7, the majority of children had achieved expected levels in their learning in reading and listening and talking and less than half of the children achieved expected levels for writing and numeracy.

Data from June 2017 shows that not all children are making sufficient progress from prior levels of attainment in literacy and English language and numeracy and mathematics. There is evidence from discussions with the senior management team that attainment is showing improvement across all areas this year. The school should ensure that, for all children, the range of data collected and analysed is used to measure progress. Revised approaches to data handling will support this to ensure staff are able to judge accurately progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. This will support staff to have the highest aspirations and ambitions for all children, to

make important decisions about learning and teaching, and to confirm their own judgements of when a child achieves a Curriculum for Excellence level.

Almost all staff know children well and are aware of the barriers to learning that they face. The school has identified a number of individual children and small groups to receive targeted support through planned interventions. Some of these are supported by the Pupil Equity Fund. Interventions provided are of a high quality and are delivered effectively by Pupil Support Assistants, linking with class teachers and Pupil Support Teachers. One very effective intervention, led by parents along with school staff and Educational Psychologists, is planned to remove literacy barriers, through the pilot of 'Pause, Prompt Praise'. Good partnership links are in place in particular with colleagues in speech and language therapy. The school should look to review additional support needs in the early years with the aim of enhancing nursery based interventions.

There is some evidence that the support provided through targeted group and individual work is having a positive impact on attainment. The school should now ensure that assessments are identified at the planning stage, to regularly monitor and gather robust evidence on interventions and any impact on outcomes for all children. Pupil Support Assistants shared with the team that they feel well deployed, valued and very much part of a team.

To support wider achievement the school provides opportunities for children to take part in WAT groups (wider achievement time groups) each term. Some of the groups include school grounds development, eco-gardening, junior librarians, Letham Swap Shop and Wateraid. Children record wider achievements in their profiles and staff also share them on the school's social media site. In the nursery, some children were able to relate their achievements to some of the wellbeing indicators. The school should progress plans to review planning, tracking and learning conversations for wider achievement to ensure children make the link between the activity and their skills development.

Parents consulted expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. They appreciate the genuine interest and care that all staff have for their children and commented favourably on the nurturing ethos of the school. Those parents consulted in the nursery described the nursery as a very positive environment, where there are a growing range of parent groups on offer including; a tumbletots physical group for two year olds, a PEEP (peers early education partnership) group for parents and children and a range of stay and play opportunities.

Child protection, additional support needs and safeguarding policies are in place which reflect the most recent legislation and are scrutinised on a regular basis. Staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures and risk assessments are in place, where appropriate, to ensure children are safe and secure whilst at school.

## **LEARNING**

In the nursery, most staff have very good interactions with children. All nursery children benefit from free flow access to a range of learning environments. A wide range of play opportunities are available to nursery children in a variety of areas and play spaces, including messy and sensory play, access to creative materials, comfortable areas and outdoor spaces. Play with open-ended natural materials has been developed and children are at times engaged deeply in play with these resources (mud, water, pipes and guttering, scooping and transporting). There are also key gathering times during the day to support quality interactions with staff and between children.

In most classes, children are actively engaged in their learning. Most children are eager and interact well during paired and group work. Resources are well organised and digital technology is used in some lessons to enhance and motivate learning. Explanations and instructions are clear

and concise with good pace observed in most lessons. In almost all lessons, teachers share the purpose of experiences through the use of learning intentions. As a result, the children are clear about what they are learning and how they can achieve success in a particular lesson. In some classes, effective differentiation was evident with teachers making good use of questioning to allow children to respond more fully and explain their thinking. In almost all classes, support staff are utilised effectively to support learning and sustain engagement.

Feedback in most classes is constructive and supports children in achieving their next steps. In some classes children are assessing and evaluating their own work and that of their peers. Approaches to target setting and feedback should be developed more consistently across the school so that children can more readily identify their next steps in learning. Profiles are used in school to evidence achievements and learning undertaken. There needs to be clarity about the purpose of profiling and pupil involvement in their profiles to ensure feedback and key learning conversations are recorded and progress learning.

Planning takes cognisance of the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and teachers create a visible learning plan which is responsive to progress in learning. The visible plan would benefit from increased evidence of pupil voice. The school has a progression pathway for literacy that is used for planning and assessment. In taking forward other areas of the curriculum, staff should consider ways of planning for each area of the curriculum so that children experience a coherent progressive pathway that is streamlined to allow them to build on their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Class teachers use a range of assessments to track the progress of learning in different areas of the curriculum. Staff should work together to ensure they plan assessment to be integral to learning and teaching, providing children with regular opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in a range of contexts. They should also ensure there is a consistent approach to gathering a range of evidence to make robust judgements on the achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level. Staff have engaged in some moderation of their professional judgements with other schools. They should continue with their plans to set up a range of further moderation activities within the school and with other schools.

In the nursery a variety of approaches are used to assess and track children's progress, including developmental milestones, language and numeracy assessments, gross and fine motor skills assessments, Child's Plans and All About Me Books. The results of these assessments are shared with other stakeholders such as speech and language colleagues and parents. Some of these assessments then lead to targeted development work with individual children or groups, provided by a Pupil Support Assistant, nursery teacher or the child's keyworker.

Planning in the nursery is responsive and follows children's interests. Long term plans are also in place to support seasonal and cultural learning opportunities as well as a breadth of curriculum. As discussed, there is scope to further involve parents in their children's learning and assessing their developmental milestones. Nursery planning could be developed to further promote oral language development in all areas of the nursery, including clearly planning targeted vocabulary across all ages.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The headteacher, depute headteacher and staff are committed to the school and its community. There now needs to be clearer strategic leadership and direction provided to ensure improved outcomes for all learners. Whilst the school improvement plan is used to identify change, the senior management team should now ensure identified priorities are implemented fully, and lead to evidenced improvement. The future direction of school improvement should reflect the reviewed vision, values and aims. The senior management team should continue to develop approaches to

ensure that all staff, parents, and children are involved in the planning and self-evaluation processes of school improvement.

Staff are encouraged to and show commitment to take forward projects to help achieve improvement, with almost all class teachers leading on an area of the curriculum or learning and teaching. There needs to be a more strategic approach to planning this work to ensure that all improvement planning and activity supports the identified improvement priorities.

The school plans to increase the leadership opportunities and skills of children by further developing citizenship groups across the school e.g. Rights Respecting Schools Committee and Digital Leaders. We ask that they now progress these plans across the school and involve children more in identifying areas for school improvement. The school needs to continue to develop creative approaches in engaging parents and partners in meaningful improvement.

## **Strengths**

- Staff who are committed to providing a nurturing, supportive and caring environment for children and families. Care and welfare is at the centre of the school's work. Staff know children and families very well. There are positive relationships between staff and children.
- The planning for and identification of children with additional support needs. The school has effective partnerships to support this.
- The commitment to working with parents and families and promoting their engagement in the life of the school.
- Staff who work well together as a team. All staff, including support staff are committed to the process of change and improvement and regularly share their skills and take leadership opportunities.

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:

- Raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Approaches to raising attainment should include ensuring there is a shared understanding of progression at all levels, making effective use of relevant data, and robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress in learning and achievement. From April 2018
- Develop a culture of high expectations and respect. In doing so, review the vision, values and aims with children, staff and parents. From April 2018
- Develop a curriculum rationale with staff, children and parents which reflects the unique context of Letham. Ensure the curriculum promotes the Skills for Learning, life and work and supports developing the young workforce. From August 2018
- Build on opportunities for children to be more involved in leading their own learning. Children should be more involved in planning for, evaluating and sharing their learning, ensuring there are regular opportunities for self and peer-assessment. From August 2018
- Develop more effective strategic leadership and self-evaluation approaches which lead to improved outcomes for all children across the nursery and primary school. From April 2018

## **Conclusion**

To support these improvements, ECS officers will work with the school in the short term and then return to the school in a year to evaluate progress.

Responsible Officer: Kim Ramsay, QIO

Email: [kimramsay@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:kimramsay@pkc.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01738 476373