



**Perth and Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services**



**Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report
Newhill Primary School
1-3 October 2013**

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this visit was to support the school in the process of self-evaluation and the visit was conducted by a team of officers from across Education and Children's Services. The themes that were subject to scrutiny were based on core Quality Indicators from How good is our school? and reflected the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note which outlines the raised expectations in relation to schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the time of the visit Newhill Primary School had a pupil roll of 332 primary children with 63 children attending nursery in the morning and 54 in the afternoon. This includes 8 children with full time places. There were 14 primary classes and also nurture provision.

Newhill Primary School forms part of the Blairgowrie Community Campus along with St Stephen's Primary School. This provides a valuable opportunity for collaborative working and recently the schools have joined forces for a collegiate time, a coffee morning and two assemblies. These events have been successful and the schools should now seek opportunities to work together as appropriate for the mutual benefit of the children on the campus.

The facilities within Newhill Primary School are very good, including rooms for drama, art and music, break out spaces for learning, quiet areas and a well-equipped library, all of which are well used to support learning.

STRENGTHS

During the visit many strengths were identified, including:

- The positive ethos of the school,
- The very high level of pastoral care and welfare provided by the staff as a result of their very good knowledge of the children and their needs and the courtesy shown by the children across the school.
- Parents recognised that their children emerge from Newhill Primary School as well rounded individuals who have a strong sense of their own self-worth.

The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership and in particular there was a focus on assessment for learning and differentiation, as identified by the headteacher in the initial discussion with the team.

PROGRESS

ACHIEVEMENT

Information was gathered from scrutiny of data, class visits, discussions with children, staff, parents and the Senior Management Team (SMT), and displays of children's work around the school.

Information provided by the school indicated that, overall, most children were making good or very good progress in their learning in reading, writing, listening and talking and mathematics. Perth and Kinross Indicators were used by staff to confirm judgements about progress in learning.

There were high expectations of writing and in the upper school there were interesting examples of a range of high quality writing displayed, reflecting current learning, for example reports and letters relating to inventions and also poetry.

Children reported that they enjoy a wide range of experiences including opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community, in particular through school shows, exhibitions, fund raising events and the work of the Pupil Council. The school is able to record the opportunities that individual children have and should now plan for these experiences as part of the curriculum.

Learning Steps jotters reflect progress in learning and are shared with parents. Although this is well embedded in the school, it should now be developed to represent a broader range of learning activities, giving learners the opportunity to select pieces of work and reflect on their progress as part of profiling learning. In addition, the school should ensure that the recording of achievement impacts on the planning of learning to provide appropriate tasks and activities for children.

Pastoral care is very strong across the school. Children in Newhill enjoy a very supportive school ethos and are confident to engage in the experiences they are offered. This aspect of the school was recognised and appreciated by parents. Children respond well to clearly understood expectations about behaviour. Across stages children work well together, demonstrating interest and mutual respect. An example of this is the effective sharing of learning done in P5 and P7. This approach should now be extended to further develop rich learning experiences for children.

LEARNING

Information was gathered from class visits, discussions with children, staff and parents and displays of children's work around the school.

Almost all children impressed as motivated and eager to learn. Across the school children were actively involved in their own learning, having some opportunity to make decisions and influence planned learning, for example through book books in the nursery.

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There was an effective and wide range of approaches to learning across the school, for example:

- Science in the wildlife garden,
- Literacy circles,
- Skills hour, and
- Planned opportunities for children in nursery and P1 to work together.

The school should now ensure that its curriculum provides well-planned and joined up learning across the four aspects of the curriculum. It should also extend the good development work done by staff, relating to skills progression.

Very good arrangements are in place to meet the wide ranging needs of the most vulnerable children in the school. The work that the school is doing this session regarding further developing assessment for learning will enable teachers to ensure that:

- The needs of all the children are being met with appropriate support and challenge, and that
- All children benefit from high quality feedback about learning, enabling them to talk confidently about their progress and next steps in learning.

As identified in the school improvement plan, this will be closely monitored throughout the session in order to review the impact of this development work. The school should also review how teachers plan for learning to ensure that this is responsive to children's learning needs.

LEADERSHIP

Information was gathered from discussions with children, staff, parents and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The headteacher and her 2 depute head teachers work very effectively as a Senior Management Team and have a very good knowledge of the school as a whole, its strengths and areas for improvement. They are held in high regard by parents who recognise the strength in the team and their influence on the good spirit within the school.

In line with council expectations, systems for self-evaluation, including the programme for monitoring learning and teaching, the annual audit programme and the range of mechanisms to seek the views of children and parents, are well established in the school. Effective use is made of the information gathered to inform school improvement and the school also has begun to take account of the raised national expectations regarding the curriculum and

improvement through self-evaluation. Overall the school is clear about its direction of travel and has an appropriate plan for improvement.

Staff have opportunities to develop leadership skills through the

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involvement in working groups within the school and in Teacher Learning Communities with colleagues from schools within the Local Management Group.

However, further actions need to be taken to ensure that the school moves forward with aspirations for excellence. These include:

- Further refinement to the focus of the monitoring for individual teachers to improve impact, taking account of the wide range of expertise and experience within staff team.
- Challenging the staff team, already highly reflective, to be increasingly innovative and creative in their approaches to learning and teaching.
- Optimising the impact of staff leadership opportunities to ensure very positive outcomes for learners which are clearly identifiable and measurable.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The very positive ethos in the school provides the children at Newhill Primary School with a supportive and engaging learning environment and overall they make good progress in their learning. The school should now focus on further developing the curriculum to fully embrace current national expectations.

Following discussion with the school the following specific areas for improvement have been identified.

- Maximise the opportunities that being part of the Blairgowrie Community Campus provides, to add value to Newhill Primary School as part of the wider community.
- Continue to develop assessment for learning strategies to ensure that the needs of all learners are effectively met and that children can engage in well planned learning conversations with teachers. This work is already underway and should be achieved by June 2014.
- Further develop curriculum planning to take account of the totality of the curriculum to ensure that it addresses raised national expectations. This should be undertaken with staff by March 2014.

Following these developments the school will be in a good position to review approaches to planning for learning to ensure that this is meaningful and manageable for session 2014-15.

A follow up visit will be made to the school during 2014-15 to review progress with the agreed actions. In the meantime, the school's Quality Improvement Officer will be kept informed of progress by the school.

[HMI Report: HM Inspection Report 2007](#)

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