



Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report North Muirton Primary School 25, 26 and 27 September 2018

BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers from across Education and Children's Services visited North Muirton Primary School and nursery class on 25, 26 and 27 September 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? (4th Edition)* and *How good is our early learning and childcare?*

At the time of the visit North Muirton Primary School had a pupil roll of 238 organised across 10 classes. The nursery has 56 children registered, attending over morning and afternoon sessions. The two specialist classes support 18 children and the school also has provision for nurture support in the Cocoon class.

The school has an attendance level of 93.6% which is below the Perth and Kinross average. There are plans in place to address this over the session.

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

Across the school children are polite, welcoming and proud of their school.

The children in the Nursery have access to a range of learning experiences which support their skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children's wider achievements are celebrated and displayed within the Nursery. Individual progress in learning and development is recorded in children's portfolios using a range of evidence gathered by practitioners and in June 2018 the majority of children met their developmental milestones. Practitioners are beginning to develop an online version of the portfolios and practitioners should ensure that the developmental milestones are used to record progress and identify children's next steps in learning when using the new system.

Attainment data from June 2018 in the primary shows that most children in Primary 1 are meeting national expectations for listening and talking and reading, with the majority meeting national expectations for writing and maths. In Primary 4 the majority of children are meeting national expectations for listening and talking and reading, with less than half working at this level for writing and maths. In Primary 7 the majority of children are achieving national expectations for listening and talking, with less than half for reading, writing and maths.

Attainment data indicates that over the past three years improvements in attainment have been variable. The senior leadership team are making use of the Perth and Kinross tracking and monitoring spreadsheets to record pupil progress. They have now used the information from this to develop approaches to better understand the attainment information about the progress of all children, including cohorts of children. This information is shared with class teachers and is beginning to form the basis for in depth discussions regarding the progress of individual pupils. This knowledge of the data should now be further developed across the school to ensure that it is most effectively used to plan, assess and monitor the impact on

individual pupil attainment. Additional funding allocated to the school through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) is being used to provide a range of support to pupils in the areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. There are early indications that it is having some positive impact on learner progress. Planning for future use of PEF should now be improved with better analysis and use of attainment data. Support staff who are involved in delivering a range of interventions are valued by teaching staff and pupils and they have positive and supportive relationships with the children.

Within the specialist classes children are well supported by all staff to feel safe, happy, nurtured and settled. The staff work together creatively to ensure children have a wide range of learning experiences. There is a calm and inclusive approach to ensuring pupils make progress with their individual targets. This was most effective where visual supports and routines were in place for pupils. Staff across the specialist classes should continue to share with each other those strategies which are most effective in order to ensure consistent approaches are used by all.

Children in the nursery have opportunities for learning beyond the nursery including weekly trips in the minibus to Quarrymill. They take part in bookbug, play on pedals and present the annual nativity play for parents.

There is a range of opportunities for achievement across the wider curriculum for all children in the school. These include a variety of school trips, sports events and rugby and football coaching. The school welcomes a range of visitors to the school for example museum staff and a touring opera company. Pupils were particularly motivated by the recent BBC visit from a famous musician. Staff organise lunchtime and after school clubs for pupils and parents and pupils spoke positively about these and talked about how they would like an increase in choice and number of activities available. The pupils have opportunities to present their learning to the school within assemblies and on open afternoons. Pupil progress in areas of their health and wellbeing is celebrated each week during their 'SHANARRI Shenanigans' where there is a focus on a particular area of wellbeing. Individual pupil achievements in school are recognised at weekly get-togethers through the star of the week awards.

North Muirton has an extremely caring ethos and the pupils have a sense of pride in their school. They report that they are always listened to in school and staff take them seriously. The parents we consulted spoke positively about the school and told us that they feel staff go 'above and beyond' for their children. They told us the staff know their children well and the support given to families by the school was of great value to them.

LEARNING

North Muirton Primary is a bright and welcoming school where the values of honesty and respect are evident. Most classrooms are well organised and stimulating learning environments. The best examples of displays around the school are of a high standard, relate to learning and are contributed to or created by pupils. There is scope to include pupils more in designing and creating learning displays. Very positive relationships between staff and children are evident and a key feature of the caring ethos. Children are polite and respectful to one another and to visitors.

In the Nursery, there was a calm and purposeful atmosphere with good interactions observed between staff and children. Practitioners know all the children well and they were relaxed, happy and engaged. They were given encouragement and appropriate praise from staff. There was a wide range of indoor and outdoor learning and play opportunities available for the children allowing personalisation and choice. Practitioners have

implemented a range of strategies from the Closing the Communication Gap programme to support children's early language and communication.

In lessons observed, most pupils were engaged in their learning and were enthusiastic participants. Pupils were treated with respect and fairness and their responses were encouraged and valued. In the best of these lessons, staff made use of ICT, they took prior learning into account and children were able to talk confidently about their learning; they knew what was expected of them and how they could achieve within the lesson. In a few lessons the pace of learning was appropriate to the different needs of pupils and staff should now ensure that the level of differentiation and challenge supports all learners in their classes. Teachers should ensure that the amount of teacher talk is reduced and that opportunities for pupils to have more say in what they are learning are developed. There is now a need to develop consistent approaches to effective learning and teaching across the school including the use of effective formative assessment strategies to support learner progress.

The school would benefit from reviewing the rationale and design of the curriculum to ensure it reflects the unique context of North Muirton. This rationale should then be reflected in the planning for all curricular areas. The staff have already begun to plan how they will develop progressive pathways in literacy and numeracy and this work will support staff to ensure that learning experiences are appropriate, differentiated, progressive and challenging for all pupils. This will allow for appropriate pace and challenge and a more inclusive approach to meeting pupil needs within the classroom. Staff knowledge of the data regarding pupil attainment is developing and this will support staff to work with pupils and parents to set challenging learning goals for individuals in order to increase attainment across the school.

All staff demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of learners. Staff across the school have a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school community and are increasing their understanding of how this impacts on their individual learners. They are nurturing, caring and work well together as a staff team. The children we talked to feel valued and supported. Child protection procedures and safeguarding policies are in place which reflect the most recent legislation. Pupils we talked to stated that they felt safe, included and listened to in their school. They told us that all the adults in the school help them when they need it.

LEADERSHIP

The newly appointed acting headteacher has developed a strong working partnership with the depute headteacher and principal teacher. As a team, they are highly regarded by the school community. They place high priority on supporting and nurturing all children and actively promote an ethos of high standards and ambition for children, staff and practitioners, parents and partners. Together they have accurately identified the key priorities for improvement for their school.

The senior leadership team should look to further develop quality assurance approaches which will support the consistency of learning and teaching. Standards should be high, shared and consistent. Collegiate time should be carefully planned to develop shared approaches to planning, teaching and assessment. Staff would benefit from self-evaluation approaches focused on the quality of learning and teaching.

Along with the whole staff team, practitioners contribute willingly to the improvement agenda. They appreciate opportunities to collaborate and share approaches with each other and across the local management group.

The newly formed pupil council has representation from all stages in the school and are looking forward to new opportunities to contribute to the work of the school. Senior prefects from primary 7 have ideas for school improvement and are keen to take these forward. There is scope to develop pupil leadership to involve all children in leading aspects of school improvement.

Staff are aware of the improvement priorities of the school. There are some opportunities for children and parents to provide feedback to the school on aspects of school improvement. Approaches to self-evaluation should now be developed and extended to allow all stakeholders to contribute to the school improvement cycle on a regular and planned basis. The school improvement priorities should be shared with children, parents and partners so that there is a shared language for improvement and a sense of ownership of the priorities.

Parents who met with the team, told us that all the staff work hard to support their children and families and they are treated with care and respect.

Conclusion

North Muirton Primary School provides a nurturing, warm and respectful environment. The staff and children demonstrate a pride in their school. Building on the key strengths below the school should now address the key areas for improvement.

Strengths

- The inclusive, caring and welcoming ethos of the whole school community where children are respectful engaged, polite welcoming and proud of their school
- Newly formed senior leadership team who are well respected, know the school well and have capacity to take forward the improvements
- Staff who are committed to the school and know their learners and community well

Areas for improvement

We discussed with the Headteacher and the Senior Management Team 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 October 2018, review the rationale and design of the curriculum to ensure a shared focus on meeting the needs of all learners in order to increase attainment.
- As planned, implement a structured programme of self-evaluation for school improvement involving all stakeholders throughout this session. This should include further development of staff knowledge of attainment data.
- From October 2018, raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Approaches to raising attainment should include ensuring there is a shared understanding of progression at all levels.
- In this current session, all teaching staff should work collegiately to develop consistent, inclusive approaches to high quality learning and teaching to ensure appropriate pace and challenge for all children.

ECS officers will work with the school and return within a year to evaluate the school's progress towards taking forward the recommendations for improvement.

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