



Perth and Kinross Council Education and Children's Services



Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report Our Lady's RC Primary School 22 and 23 March 2016

BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers and one Headteacher from across Education and Children's Services visited Our Lady's RC Primary School and Nursery Class on 22 and 23 March 2016. 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 ? (3rd EDITION)* and by using the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note. It outlines the raised expectations in relation to all schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the time of the visit, Our Lady's RC Primary School had a pupil roll of 271 which is organised in 9 classes and a nursery class. Attendance is just below the national average. The school is led by a Headteacher and Depute Headteacher who are non-class committed.

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

ACHIEVEMENT

Children at Our Lady's RC Primary School are welcoming, friendly and engaged in their active learning opportunities. Visitors to the school comment on their good manners and worthwhile contributions to the wider community for example, reading the Liturgy at Sunday Mass.

In the nursery, most children confidently talk to adults and their friends. They are developing their early writing skills using emergent writing and increasingly detailed drawings when making cards to take home to their families. A few older children are writing their names and words that are familiar to them. Attainment data in 2015-16 indicates that across the primary stages, most children are making good progress with their learning in listening and talking, with the majority of children making good progress in reading, writing and numeracy in line with national expectations. The school is working closely with Speech and Language therapists on a communication programme (Oral Language to Unlock Learning) which is impacting positively on young children's extended vocabulary development.

Children's progress in literacy and numeracy is tracked by all class teachers and is regularly discussed with a member of the Senior Management Team. The school has identified the need to record and scrutinise attainment standards of pupils and class stages over time and is ensuring that such a system is in place by the end of this

school session. This will enable the Senior Management Team to identify trends in literacy and numeracy and take steps to timeously support children who are making less than expected progress. The school is working closely with the St John's Local Management Group to develop their approaches to literacy. For example, staff have been working on the 'Model for Improvement' which supports the teaching of reading across the school and further involves parents in their children's learning. The school works closely with the Principal Teacher of maths at St John's Academy to support moderation and transition from P7 to S1.

Personal and social development opportunities are planned throughout the school, for example, learning about 'Getting it Right for Every Child' using the wellbeing indicators. The learning and teaching of healthy lifestyles has been identified as a priority for attention. All children are encouraged to regularly drink water and choose healthy snacks. In P1, children proudly spoke about their healthy choice of fruit for playtime and were rewarded with house points in recognition of their commitment to healthy eating.

The "Preparation for Sacraments" and "The Pope Francis Faith Award" programmes give relevant and rewarding opportunities for children to reflect on their faith and commitment to personal growth and responsibility. Children comment that such experiences help them to understand the links between these programmes and how they can make improvements to their school, such as developing opportunities in the playground for them to behave positively towards one another. Children who participate in extra-curricular groups say that they feel respected by their fellow pupils and staff. The 'Rights Respecting Schools' agenda promotes positive behaviour by ensuring individual respect for all. Pupils lead assemblies, focusing on the 'Right of the Fortnight', for example the right to play and rest was shared by the P3/4 class.

LEARNING

The learning environment offers adequate space for learning indoors and extensive grounds for outdoor learning. The school is well supported by the neighbouring church in developing the ethos and embedding the principles of Catholic Education. Children participate in a broad range of experiences within and beyond the school that enhance their learning for example taking part in sports and learning competitions, fund raising and performing to packed audiences. P6 pupils participated in the Mock Court Case project which brought real life meaning to their studies.

Across the school, learners are treated with fairness and respect by all staff. In the majority of lessons observed there were good opportunities to achieve in learning; explanations and instructions were clear, building on previous learning and real-life experiences. In the best lessons observed, success criteria were created with learners and were used by the children when self and peer assessing their work. Maths sets are well established and are regularly evaluated. Staff should continue to plan opportunities for children to move within and across sets with appropriate support to ensure that all learning needs are met.

Throughout the school, children were observed engaging in a variety of active experiences, using a range of resources which enhanced their learning by making it relevant and meaningful. In the majority of classes, the use of formative assessment

strategies supported pace and challenge. However, across the school there needs to be a stronger focus on differentiation to ensure all learners reach their potential.

All children experience a broad, general education which includes opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills through a range of learning contexts. The school is in the process of revisiting the rationale and design of its curriculum. Integral to this will be ensuring that learning experiences enable all relevant skills and attributes to be developed in many different ways. The recently introduced Learning Journey folders are designed to capture class and individual targets for each planning block. There is evidence to show that children are thinking about these targets and displaying evidence of achieving them. The school team should continue to develop these Learning Journeys as they have the potential to capture progress in learning across the curriculum, wider achievements and learning conversations with teachers as well as personal targets set by individual children.

The school is developing an approach to curriculum planning that supports children to be more actively involved in planning and being responsible for their own learning. This, together with continued development of the Learning Journey folders, Learning Logs and Learning Walls will give staff and children the opportunity to plan and review learning across the totality of the curriculum. Staff, with support from the Senior Management Team, now need to review, revise and reduce planning processes in order to further enhance learning for all children.

Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) are well supported by the Pupil Support Teacher and the Pupil Support Assistants who work with individuals and also with groups of children for example, in maths sets and with the Oral Language to Unlock Learning programme. Working with appropriate support agencies, the school has developed Individualised Education Programmes for identified children. These require to be closely monitored to ensure consistency and regular updates.

LEADERSHIP

The Headteacher and Depute Headteacher have been working together in a permanent capacity for almost two years. They have a clear vision for what requires to be done to take the school forward. They are focused on working closely with all staff to drive forward an improvement agenda to support all children to achieve. Parents and the local parish priest find them approachable and solution focused. Parents appreciate the time spent with them when they have concerns about their children.

Staff have responded to opportunities to lead on a number of programmes. For example, during this session almost all teaching staff are engaged in the Tapestry Programme which provides professional development sessions for teachers focusing on improving learning and teaching. Teachers' continuing engagement with this work will support children in understanding their progress and next steps in learning as they move through the school.

There are various opportunities for children to develop leadership skills. Pupils who are involved in these activities commented enthusiastically on these experiences and could identify the benefits such as increased responsibility, confidence, ability to self-evaluate and how they influence what happens in their school. These important opportunities for

leadership now need to be extended across the school with a view to including all pupils from nursery to P7.

Parents and children commented positively on the improved school systems for communication; for example the school App and the Twitter account. In focus groups, children articulated a strong sense of their own learning and that of others. They were able to reflect on their school experiences and recognised when they learn best.

Through self-evaluation the school recognises the need to continue the focus on raising attainment for all children. There is a recognition that the pace of improvement needs to increase by further distributing the leadership of developments among staff.

KEY STRENGTHS

- The articulate, well-behaved children who are keen to learn and contribute to the life of the school and its community.
- The inclusive, caring ethos which has the Catholic faith at the heart of its vision and values.
- The breadth of experiences available to children within and beyond the school, supported by the school community, that enhance their learning experiences.
- The positive involvement of the school within St John's Local Management Group which focuses on developing children's literacy skills.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

With the support of officers from the Education Services Senior Management Team and staff should work together to increase the pace of change as follows:

- By August 2016, teachers should have continued to review, revise and reduce their approaches to planning and recording learning and develop a more consistent approach to tracking progress and recording achievement. This will include further development of curriculum planning, Learning Journey folders, Learning Logs and Learning Walls with a view to involving children more fully in their learning.
- Beginning in August and continuing throughout session 2016-17, there requires to be a whole school focus on raising attainment and achievement by continuing to develop the rationale and design of the curriculum and as planned, develop a system to record and scrutinise attainment over time.
- By October 2016, increase opportunities for children across the school to take part in leadership roles that will further develop their confidence and skills for learning, life and work.

CONCLUSION

Our Lady's RC Primary School provides a safe, nurturing environment for children to develop and learn. Senior managers and staff are working together and have the capacity to take the school forward on its improvement journey. In session 2016-17, the School Improvement Plan will include a focus on the above mentioned priorities to ensure all children are given opportunities to reach their potential.

As part of the normal ELAV follow up procedures, ECS officers will return within a year to evaluate the school's progress towards taking forward the recommendations for improvement.

[HMI Report 2011](#)

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