



**Perth and Kinross Council  
Education and Children's Services  
Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report**

**Portmoak Primary School  
28 February 2017 and 1 March 2017**



## **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this visit was to support the school in the process of self-evaluation. The visit was conducted by four Quality Improvement Officers from Education and Children's Services. The themes subject to scrutiny were based on core Quality Indicators from 'How good is our school?' (4<sup>th</sup> edition) and reflected the most recent advice note from Education Scotland which outlines raised expectations in relation to schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

Information was gathered from visits to classes, scrutiny of data, records and children's work, discussions with children, parents and staff, and displays of children's work around the school.

Portmoak Primary School is led by a Headteacher with the support of a Principal Teacher who is class committed for 0.8 FTE each week. At the time of the visit the school had a pupil roll of 113 children, organised across five classes. At 96.6%, pupil attendance is above the national average.

## **ACHIEVEMENT**

Most children in Portmoak Primary School are making very good progress in their learning. In June 2016 all children in P1 were making very good progress or better in reading, writing, listening and talking and maths. At P4 almost all children were making very good progress or better in reading and listening and talking, and most children were making very good progress in maths and writing. At P7 most children were making very good progress or better in reading, writing, listening and talking and maths.

Over the past four years, generally data shows an improving trend in terms of children being judged to be secure in their learning in reading, writing, listening and talking and maths in relation to national targets. Regular tracking and monitoring meetings between the headteacher and class teachers focus on the current and predicted attainment of individual children. Where concerns about a child's rate of progress are identified, actions are agreed and strategies put in place to support that child to make appropriate progress. Staff use the Perth and Kinross Indicators to support professional judgements about progress in learning and at P1, P3 and P5 standardised assessments are also used to augment data collected by on-going class-based assessment activities.

Annually a detailed analysis of attainment data, taking account of stage, gender and known additional support needs (ASN), is prepared by the headteacher and shared with all teaching staff. Additional data is used by the headteacher to ensure that where children are facing barriers to learning those barriers are effectively addressed.

Learning Journey Jotters (LJJs) are used in all classes to evidence children's progress in learning over time. Parents consulted particularly appreciate these snap shots of their own child's learning journey. There is now an opportunity to use the LJJs to promote parental engagement by incorporating a forward looking learning plan which enables parents to

support their child's learning. The use of LJJ's to share evidence of progress in planned learning with parents would also be appropriate.

The curriculum planned for children at Portmoak Primary School is broad and varied. Within social subjects, science and technologies, a 3 year rolling programme of 'topics' are delivered within a suggested context; teachers have flexibility to follow children's interests or take account of relevant local, national or international agendas. There would be benefit in ensuring all children understand that they can influence the topics studied. In response to concerns raised by parents in relation to pace of progress in learning French, across the school this session children have benefited from discrete teaching by a fluent French speaker, reinforcing the use by their own class teacher of appropriate French conversation within the routine of the school day.

Social and emotional aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum are well supported by BounceBack and self-regulation approaches; Growth Mindsets has been an area of professional development and its impact is to be reviewed this session. The school has registered its commitment to the Rights Respecting Schools agenda and plan to develop this focus further next session. Across the school children can talk about the Wellbeing Wheel, also known as SHANARRI. Pupil wellbeing is a focus for Teacher Talk Time in Portmoak Primary School, giving every child the opportunity for a 1:1 conversation with their class teacher about how they feel about their learning; the use of the wellbeing web at one such session each year promotes the importance of positive health and wellbeing.

Children at Portmoak Primary School enjoy many opportunities for wider achievement. The range of lunchtime and after-school clubs on offer includes cricket, fencing, football, netball, drama, cooking and sewing. Sport Scotland Awards, ECO accreditation and the school's long-standing success in the Perth and Kinross Euroquiz all reflect the importance placed on achievement. At P6 all pupils engage in achieving the John Muir Award. At P7 the Dalguise residential trip, shared with other schools from the Local Management Group (LMG), is focused on achieving personal goals. For all children, wider achievements are recorded in LJJ's along with the school's 'special mentions'. The school now plan to track opportunities for wider achievement to ensure that every child does benefit from an appropriate range of activities and opportunities for wider achievement.

*Portmoak LIFE*, encompassing the school's vision, values and aims, is focused on the importance of learning, inclusion, friendship and the environment. It is very well embedded across the whole school community and the motto, "Being the best I can be", exemplifies the high expectations evident at Portmoak Primary School. Children, parents and staff consulted spoke of friendship and inclusion as being at the heart of the school. Portmoak Primary School has developed effective partnerships with parents and agencies which are supporting improved outcomes for learners and their families. Children and parents consulted report that their views are sought, taken seriously and influence decision making.

## **LEARNING**

Portmoak Primary School offers a range of stimulating and well-organised learning environments where children engage in high quality learning through meaningful activity. Around the school displays reflect and support learning. The extensive school grounds include a football pitch, a trim trail and an attractive wildlife area and pond. All children are involved in a school committee and take responsibility at a whole school level.

Outdoor learning is becoming embedded as a core component of the curriculum in Portmoak Primary School. In promoting outdoor learning and creativity, teachers have agreed a minimum level of access to planned learning outdoors for all children.

The immediate local area includes Loch Leven and the RSPB reserve, Bishop Hill, the woodland and the lime kilns. Weekly visits to the school by Kinesswood in Bloom enable every child at Portmoak to be involved in activity to develop the school grounds at some point each year. The *Our Portmoak* project and the *Michael Bruce* project, (marking the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of local poet Michael Bruce), are currently providing an increased range of rich learning opportunities within the context of the local community.

There is an opportunity now to develop a skills based approach to planning and tracking the learning that takes place outwith the classroom, including that supported by the school's committees and many effective local partnerships, to ensure all pupils are making good progress in developing the range of skills for learning, life and work.

In the best of lessons observed, almost all children engaged well in appropriately differentiated learning experiences, at times influenced by children's views and interests, and supported by skilful use of questioning to extend learning. Children contributed to creating relevant learning intentions and success criteria and had opportunities to peer and self-assess their learning. In some classes digital resources were used very effectively enhancing children's engagement and enjoyment. In P2/3 the impact of iTeach was evident as Digital Leaders supported children to use iMovie on iPads. The school is now well placed to develop a consistent use of Assessment is for Learning (AifL) strategies and digital approaches across all classes.

Robust processes and procedures are in place for monitoring attendance and identifying children's additional support needs. Child's Plan meetings, are ensuring partners work together to make a difference. Support staff are deployed effectively and flexibly and there is evidence of very good partnership working between staff in school and other agencies including with colleagues in Educational Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy.

Portmoak Primary School's curriculum rationale statement reflects the school's unique position in the local community. The school now plans to further develop shared understanding with parents and partners by incorporating *Portmoak LIFE* in their curriculum rationale.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The leadership provided by the headteacher at Portmoak has been very effective in developing a supportive school community focused to deliver high quality learning for all children. The acting principal teacher supports the headteacher well and models very good learning and teaching. The staff team is cohesive, committed and effective. All staff undertake a range of leadership roles related to the committees system, local and national initiatives. Planned collegiate sessions include moderation activities with other local schools and teachers' engagement with research which has impacted on classroom practice, for example the introduction of the Growth Mindsets approach. All support staff have used the Included, Engaged and Involved (IEI) resource to support their own professional development.

The headteacher meets regularly with the Pupil Council and with focus groups of pupils from across the school, discussing progress with current improvement priorities and seeking their views. Across the school children enjoy opportunities for leadership in accredited activities, committees, project work with partners, as house captains and as pupil council representatives. The school should now move to increase the focus on the development of skills within these activities, and track children's experiences and skills based learning to ensure appropriate opportunities for all.

Parents consulted appreciated the very good communication systems in place at Portmoak and the school's Open Door policy. The headteacher works closely with the Parent Council chairperson and several parents volunteer in the school on a regular basis. Parents value the class Learning Assemblies and Open Afternoons. Recent changes in the format of homework have increased children's engagement with the tasks set. All stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the school's self-evaluation processes and thereby inform priorities in the improvement plan; changes to the teaching of French and a focus on internet safety arising from 2016 survey responses are current examples of that.

## **CONCLUSION**

Portmoak is a highly regarded school at the heart of its local community. Children, staff, parents and partners all evidence a real pride in their school and in the quality of education it provides.

Building on the key strengths identified below, the school should now address the areas for development identified in this report, including them in the planned improvements for session 2017-18. Education officers will visit the school again within a year of the publication of this report to validate the school's own report on how well it has taken forward the main areas for improvement detailed below.

### **Key Strengths**

- Well established local partnerships for learning which enhance the range of rich learning experiences provided for all children.
- Effective teamwork, across the whole staff team and the wider school community, focused to deliver high quality learning for all children.
- Articulate and well-behaved children who engage enthusiastically in their learning.
- The leadership of the headteacher in aspiring to achieve excellence with equity for all learners at Portmoak Primary School.

### **Main areas for improvement**

- Continue with plans to incorporate *Portmoak LIFE* in the curriculum rationale. (by August 2017)
- Extend the planning and tracking of learning to include the range of skills for learning, life and work. (from August 2017)
- Further develop the iTeach Digital Leaders programme. (from August 2017)
- Revise Learning Journey Jotters to support parental engagement by sharing the planned learning for the term ahead and to capture (and enable the tracking of) children's wider achievements. (from August 2017)

### [HMI Report 2007](#)

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