

24 June 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

Royal School of Dunkeld Primary School and Nursery Class Perth and Kinross Council

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including pupil voice and the whole-school approach to interdisciplinary learning. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the school, children are learning and achieving very well. In the nursery, children can choose to play independently or in small groups and they are increasingly making decisions about what they want to learn. They lead conferences to showcase their learning to their families, for example to launch their own book, 'Little Red Hen'. At the primary stages, the quality of learning and teaching is consistently high and classrooms are vibrant and exciting places to learn. As a result, children are very well motivated and feel that their opinions count. Teachers are skilled at providing opportunities for children to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. Children respond by being imaginative and creative. They value the role staff give them in helping to improve their learning and their school. They take responsibility for planning their own learning, set targets, and assess their own work with their peers. They confidently plan and contribute to projects linked to their school and local community, such as their high-quality work on sustainability, for which they have been awarded four Eco-Schools Scotland green flags.

Children respond very well to the high expectations staff have of them. In the nursery, children benefit from developing literacy and numeracy skills through the whole-school Commonwealth Games theme. Children enjoy the challenge of counting in tens when measuring out a 100 metre running track. Using mathematical language, they compare their own performance in running 100 metres with the athlete Usain Bolt. At the primary stages, children's attainment in English and mathematics is strong, with almost all achieving or exceeding national expectations. The school promotes a love of reading. Children are encouraged to read for pleasure and they study books and novels together. Their writing is of a high standard and they are given a wide range of interesting contexts to apply their writing skills. This includes communicating by email

with children in schools across the Commonwealth, and in preparing broadcasts for the local radio station, Heartland FM. Through carefully planned interdisciplinary topic work and through their involvement in different groups and committees, children are given real-life contexts to develop and apply their numeracy and mathematical skills. For example, at the middle stages, children organise all aspects of the school sports day. Older children use their knowledge about data handling very well to create a range of graphs which compare information about different Commonwealth countries, sports and athletes. Children are also achieving very well in a wide range of other activities. These include cross country running, orienteering, fencing, singing in the Gaelic choir and learning to play musical instruments. They are very proud of their 'Royal Tree of Achievement' which celebrates the successes of children from the nursery and each class. The important skills and talents that children develop outwith school are also encouraged and celebrated by all. The involvement of children from P3 to P7 in the school's citizenship committees allows them to develop their leadership and organisational skills, and actively contribute to improving their school.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Across the nursery and primary stages, staff meet the differing needs of children very well. Careful tracking of children's progress helps staff identify children who need additional support or extra challenge. Children benefit from the valuable support of nursery staff, teachers, support assistants and visiting professionals. Teachers and nursery staff set worthwhile tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for all children. Staff are skilful in their use of questioning and actively encourage children to think for themselves. Parents are encouraged to be active partners in their child's learning. Almost all parents are very positive about the work of the school. Nursery staff and teachers use Curriculum for Excellence guidance very well. They plan together to ensure that children benefit from a rich and relevant curriculum, and to ensure that children's skills and knowledge are developing in a progressive way. Children play a key role in deciding how and what they will learn. They create 'big' and 'little' questions which helps to shape the direction of their topic and classwork. Staff plan exciting whole-school themes which provide children with very good opportunities to learn together, often in mixed-age groups. Staff make very good use of the outstanding school grounds and local community to make children's learning experiences active, relevant and interesting. As a result of the successful, whole-school approaches to interdisciplinary learning, children are learning to apply a range of important skills, such as literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and leadership, across their learning.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership for learning and improvement. In her year in post, she has worked with the whole school community to develop a clear and shared vision, which is to ensure that every child receives a high-quality learning experience. Innovative approaches to self-evaluation are leading to consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the nursery and school. In particular, children's ability to assess their own learning and evaluate the impact of their citizenship groups is sector-leading. The highly-skilled staff reflect continuously together on their practice. They work extremely well as a team to provide a vibrant and inclusive environment for learning. As a result, the school is very successful in

developing confident, articulate and thoughtful children who are ready to take on challenges.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the school had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Articulate and thoughtful children who are motivated by high-quality learning experiences.
- The extensive range of opportunities for children to achieve success.
- Positive partnerships with parents, professionals and the local community.
- The commitment of all staff to providing a caring, inclusive and vibrant environment for learning.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher in securing improvements through innovative approaches to self-evaluation.

We discussed with staff and Perth and Kinross Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to build on the high-quality education and care being provided for all children.

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We shall work with the school and Perth and Kinross Council to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Lesley A Johnstone
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/RoyalSchoolOfDunkeldPrimarySchoolPerthandKinross.asp>

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