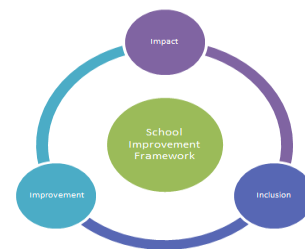




Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report St Stephen's RC Primary School 24 and 25 October 2019



BACKGROUND

The purpose of this visit was to support the school in the process of self-evaluation. The visit was conducted by two Quality Improvement Officers from Education and Children's Services, one GIRFEC Development Officer, one Education Additional Support Officer and one peer Headteacher. The themes subject to scrutiny were based on core Quality Indicators from 'How good is our school?' (4th edition).

Information was gathered from visits to classes, scrutiny of data, records and children's work, discussions with children, parents and staff, and other evidence of learning.

In St Stephen's RC Primary School, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprises a Headteacher and Principal Teacher. At the time of the visit the school had a pupil roll of 87 pupils, organised across 4 classes. Pupil attendance for session 2018-19 was 94.8% which was just below the Perth and Kinross average of 95%; the school has plans to address this by monitoring and tracking attendance closely providing support where required. This support includes extending its Rise and Shine breakfast provision and further developing its Family Learning programme.

ACHIEVEMENT

At St Stephen's RC Primary School there is a welcoming ethos and a strong sense of community. Staff, pupils and parents describe the community as the 'St Stephen's Family' and are proud of their school. Relationships across the school are positive, and staff know children and families well. This strong ethos is supported by their Catholic Faith, the partnership with the Parish Priest as well as local community links. Children at St Stephen's Primary School are polite and well-mannered and the children spoken to report that they feel they are progressing well in their learning. They state that staff are very good at looking after them, making learning fun and ensuring that everyone is respectful.

Attainment data reviewed in the areas of literacy and numeracy for 2018-2019 indicates that in Primary One all children achieved Early Level in numeracy and the majority achieved Early Level in listening and talking, reading and writing. In Primary Four, most children achieved First Level in numeracy, the majority in reading and writing and almost all in listening and talking. In Primary Seven, the majority of children achieved Second Level in numeracy, writing and reading and most children achieved second level in listening and talking. The school has developed good relationships with partner nurseries and the Principal Teacher makes good use of Developmental Milestones and transition play dates to monitor, track and support children.

The school uses the Perth and Kinross system to track and monitor pupil attainment over time. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and teaching staff find it a helpful tool to support their analysis of pupil progress. It provides a focus for teachers to engage in discussions with the SLT about attainment levels and the progress of children in their class; it also helps the school to identify which interventions are making the most difference. The SLT should now review its approaches to planning and tracking meetings to ensure all staff are able to articulate the universal support children receive as part of day to day class learning, as well as the relevant targeted interventions and approaches. This will help all staff understand how both universal and targeted approaches are having a positive impact and are ensuring all children can reach their potential.

Class teachers use a range of different assessments to evaluate the progress of learning for individuals. Work should now be undertaken to ensure that a wide range and variety of assessment evidence is gathered regularly for each area of the curriculum. In addition, to support teacher judgements about pupil progress, regular opportunities for staff to discuss this assessment evidence alongside collaborative planning should be organised. This should be undertaken with colleagues within school and in other schools.

In St. Stephen's, there are a number of identified children and small groups who receive targeted support through planned interventions. Some of these are supported by the Pupil Equity Fund and the additional recruitment and training of skilled support staff. Staff work extremely well together and in partnership with other agencies to help support individuals; there is a collective responsibility and desire to ensure the best possible outcomes for all children. The welcoming and inclusive approach towards new children and families has ensured, for example, children with English as an additional language are making good progress overall. The school now needs to ensure that all children identified as having Additional Support Needs (ASN) have the relevant level of planning in place along with a robust review process to track progression alongside attainment. These actions, along with a review of statutory responsibilities in relation to wellbeing and safeguarding, would support the SLT in making more informed decisions about the support required for individual pupils and would ensure pupils and parents are further involved in the planning process.

Children are encouraged to talk about achievements gained from external clubs and activities and have opportunities to share these in class and at assemblies. The school has a number of pupil groups which include an Eco Committee, a Rights Respecting Schools Committee (which achieved its Gold Award September 2019), Pupil Council and House System. Every child in St Stephen's is part of a Committee group. These groups provide opportunities for the application of skills being learnt in class, as well as enhancing the strong sense of community that the school has developed. Such opportunities should be evaluated regularly to ensure that children are clear about how they are extending their curricular learning and skills development when participating in committee work. This could also be applied to the school and after-school clubs which children attend.

Parents consulted told us that their children are happy at St. Stephen's and that there is a warm positive environment. They said that the staff are approachable, supportive of them and their children and commented positively on the nurturing ethos of the school. There was a consensus that the school has an 'open door' approach and that any concerns or questions can be easily shared with staff; the visibility of the Headteacher was also welcomed by parents. Parents make good use of an online digital tool which is used by every class to keep up to date about their child's learning and communication methods are generally effective. Parents are keen to support the school's improvement priorities and would welcome more information about their role in this, as well as class learning. To support this the SLT should now ensure that an appropriate mix of digital and non-digital communication methods is used to consistently, along with events such as curricular evenings/open afternoons.

LEARNING

The children at St Stephen's are articulate, respectful, enthusiastic and polite. Children have access to a variety of play areas in the school grounds which support play and outdoor learning. Children's work is displayed throughout the school and in almost all classes good use is made of classroom displays to celebrate children's learning. This has the most impact when displays make clear what children were learning and how their ideas and imagination have been used. The school should now ensure that displays also support children's learning, for example by displaying the strategies or approaches they have used and evidencing progression.

In almost all classes, children are engaged in their learning and can talk about the purpose of what they are learning. Almost all children are eager and interact well during paired and group work. Resources were well organised and supported the learning effectively; digital technology was used in some lessons to enhance and motivate learning. In the majority of lessons observed, explanations and instructions were clear and learning intentions and success criteria were shared. In the best lessons observed

learning intentions were shared through discussion and questioning and as a result, success criteria were co-constructed and built effectively upon previous learning. In the best lessons observed there was also clear differentiation, support and challenge for learners; the school should now consider how it can share this effective practice to ensure a more coherent learning experience for children.

Feedback in the majority of classes is constructive and supports children in achieving their next steps. Approaches to target setting and feedback should be developed more coherently across the school to provide children with increased opportunities to talk about their learning, the strategies they use and the skills they are developing. This will support all children to develop a shared language of learning and to build their skills in leading their own learning. 'My Learning Folios' are used in school to evidence achievements and learning undertaken. There needs to be clarity about the purpose of profiling and pupil involvement in their profiles to ensure evidence and key learning conversations are recorded and progress learning. The standard of pupil work seen in the sample of jotters provided was variable. To improve this, teachers should agree a clear and consistent approach to the presentation and frequency of pupils work in jotters so that progression of skills and knowledge is clearly evident.

The school's vision, values and aims are displayed prominently across the school. It is attractively displayed on a poster and is evident in classrooms and corridors. Further consideration should be given to ensure the school's vision, values and aims underpin its curriculum rationale, inform curriculum design and planning and are accessible for all pupils. The school has identified training and resources which support conceptual development and progression in maths and is working collaboratively with schools across the Blairgowrie Local Management Group to develop these approaches. The school should continue with its successful approaches to address gaps in the early acquisition of literacy skills and consider what further strategies and interventions are required to improvement attainment at a universal level as well as with targeted interventions recorded in individual pupil plans.

Teachers have engaged in moderation of their professional judgements with other schools. Professional development opportunities such as peer observations and learning and teaching sessions on in-service days have also had a positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching across the school. Staff should continue with their plans to set up a range of further moderation activities within the school and with other schools. As planned, teachers should engage in further peer observations and good practice visits to ensure effective approaches are identified and shared regularly. For example, class teachers agree how children with additional support needs are identified, engaged and supported through whole class lessons, group support and individual targeted support.

LEADERSHIP

The Headteacher, principal teacher and staff are committed to the school and its community.

Staff have engaged in professional dialogue and self-evaluation to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Parents have opportunities to provide feedback at parent contact meetings, curriculum events and through questionnaires. The senior leadership team should continue to develop approaches to ensure that all staff, parents, and children are involved in the planning and self-evaluation processes of school improvement. The impact of improvements should be evaluated and evidenced regularly by staff, pupils and parents using rigorous processes and robust data. There needs to be a more strategic approach to planning this work to ensure that all improvement planning and activity supports the identified priorities and is rigorously evaluated to measure impact.

Staff are encouraged to show commitment and to take forward projects to help achieve improvement, with all class teachers leading or working on an area of the curriculum or learning and teaching. Teaching staff appreciated opportunities to share ideas and use their own initiative. SRECC/STEM; 1+2; Literacy; Maths; Non-teaching staff also felt that the Headteacher encouraged them to develop their professional expertise and skills. The Employee Review and Development (ERD) process made them feel valued and appreciated and they have opportunities to lead on pupil committees and learning conversations. The partnership with Beech Manor Care Home is a good example of intergenerational work which is led

effectively by a pupil support assistant and provides pupils with the opportunity to develop skills for learning, life and work.

The pupil groups and committees have a detailed knowledge of the improvement priorities for the school. They meet regularly with the SLT and staff to discuss these and learn about them. This group should now contribute further to the improvement work of the school, for example, by using 'How good is OUR school'; a resource to support learner participation in school improvement.

Strengths

- The caring and inclusive ethos within the school – staff know the children well and the children, parent and staff describe the school as a family.
- The children in St Stephen's are articulate, respectful, enthusiastic, polite and proud of their school. Almost all are engaged in their learning.
- There is a strong sense of team and community amongst the children, staff and parents, supporting an ethos of collaboration.
- Partnerships within the school community which are enriching children's experiences and providing opportunities for children to develop skills for learning, life and work.
- The use of Pupil Equity Fund to support pupils through the Rise and Shine initiative and Creativity Club has improved attendance for targeted pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all statutory requirements in relation to wellbeing and safeguarding responsibilities and procedures are in place, followed and reviewed regularly based on Perth and Kinross policies and guidance (from Dec '19).
- Develop the processes for recording and planning for additional support needs across the school (from Dec '19).
- Review school improvement planning and self-evaluation approaches to include all partners in the identification of improvement priorities, gathering evidence and evaluation of impact and progress (from Jan '20).
- Improve consistency in the learning and teaching approaches used in classrooms through additional moderation opportunities, peer observations, sharing effective practice and to raise expectation in the standard and quality of pupil work (from Jan '20).

Children, staff and parents at St Stephen's RC Primary evidence a pride in their school. Building on the key strengths identified, the school should now address the areas for improvement, including them in the planned improvements for session 2019-20. Education officers will provide support through creating a plan to prioritise key actions and will visit the school again within a year of the publication of this report to validate the school's own evaluation on how well it has taken forward the main areas for improvement.

[HMI Report](#)

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