

Your Ref:

Education Services

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ANNANDALE\HECKLEGIRTH\LET001-GB\EGIRJL

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LETTER REPORTING ON PROGRESS OF HECKLEGIRTH PRIMARY SCHOOL SINCE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT OF FEBRUARY 2015

Hecklegirth Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland in June 2012. The inspection focussed on: 1) How well children learn and achieve; 2) How well the school supports children to develop and learn and 3) How well the school improves the quality of its work. Inspectors engaged the school in continuing engagement visits in November 2013 and November 2014. Education Scotland disengaged following this last visit, as a result of significant progress made by the school.

As part of the quality reporting arrangements of Education Services, Dumfries and Galloway Council, I am writing to inform you of the progress made by Hecklegirth School since the publication of the Education Scotland report in February 2015.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Focus is maintained on raising attainment through effective learning and teaching. Teachers gather evidence from observations, pupils' work and attainment data from a range of sources to lead planned discussions with the Headteacher. These tracking meetings have enabled all teaching staff to talk with confidence and clarity about the overview of progression, trends in attainment and interventions required to help children learn and achieve their full potential. Progress is monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure the support offered is helping to raise levels of achievement, attainment and participation in the school.

The school's Literacy Development Group has taken responsibility for leading improvements across literacy. As a result, staff are now more confident to deliver quality learning experiences that are carefully planned, assessed and moderated, leading to improved attainment in reading and writing. Learners' progress and next steps in reading are identified through class assessments, Accelerated Reading Star Tests and Literacy planning. The school reviewed the delivery of Big Writing and use of the Scottish Criterion Scale. Staff have been trained in the Primary One Literacy and Assessment Action

Resource (POLAAR) to help inform robust professional judgements. Moderation of writing is built into the school development time to demonstrate the significance of sharing high expectations across the school. As a result of our improvements in this area, all pupils are writing with increased confidence using a range of relevant contexts.

Staff identified the need to further develop mental agility and accuracy. An Education Scotland team worked with the cluster initially to increase awareness of a clear overview of progression in mental maths to help pupils achieve their potential. Groupings, focused additional support, team-teaching and moderation were introduced to help improve teacher and pupil confidence and increase pace and challenge to support raising attainment. The school introduced daily mental, active maths sessions and subscribed to interactive maths programs to help build pupil confidence with mental agility and recall. This has resulted in raised attainment and staff are working on developing the application of these skills in problem solving tasks. Information sheets for parents and wall displays for learners have been created by staff to help share the language used. Twilight sessions in ICT were identified and run by teachers. This helped to build staff confidence in using online programs to support numeracy skills. The school subscribes to Education City to help reinforce learning through technology and staff are able to access a range of free online resources to promote interactive learning in numeracy and maths across the school.

Throughout the year, teachers meet to discuss approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Focus is maintained through working with cluster colleagues, peer observations or team-teaching opportunities. Professional reviews help teaching staff to identify strengths and areas for development and they are becoming increasingly confident to share good practice and access resources, including visits to others schools.

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

A working group made up of staff and parents has secured improvement in the transition from Nursery to Primary One. The group worked together to create a calendar of events with relevant contexts for learning. These activities have been carefully considered to provide a breadth of experiences that help build on previous knowledge and develop a clear progression of skills. As part of this, pupils from P6 have been building their confidence as leaders of learning through the buddy programme. This includes regular visits to Nursery, writing information letters, delivering talks to parents and creating a display of evidence. The introduction of the Daily Mile has also provided buddies with opportunities to build their relationship while promoting healthy lifestyles together. Due to its success, this programme has now been rolled out across the school as part of our HWB programme of learning.

Opportunities to involve the Nursery staff and pupils in whole school initiatives and developments have helped staff raise their awareness of progression frameworks across the school. This has helped to ensure pace and challenge are addressed effectively to raise attainment for all. Whole school events such as the 'Wheely Good Day', led by the Pupil Council and parents, World Book Day and the World of Work Week, which all included the Nursery, as recommended, have encouraged learners of all ages to work together. Staff have planned a range of cross-cutting themes to help deepen learning. These are integrated into the whole school plan for Interdisciplinary Learning and allow for regular discussions with pupils. This has resulted in responsive planning and has ensured young learners' interests are reflected in their learning. The Nursery Teacher has worked closely with Primary colleagues to ensure experiences and outcomes are tailored for age and stage and promote a wealth of opportunities that help learners make links, both indoors and outdoors.

Nursery staff have improved consistency in Personal learning Plans (PLPs) through sharing regular, dated evidence to help demonstrate improvements. The improved use of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) by all staff has helped encourage children to engage more in learning conversations. This has provided staff with a clearer assessment of the child's understanding. Effective questioning encourages learners to be more creative in their thinking and is particularly evident in the outdoor area where problem-solving tasks promote curiosity and self-expression. Next steps are clear and concise and are now being used to help inform discussions about planning. Targets now form the key learning targets for Primary One to help build on early gains. The primary school has developed Personal Learning Plans to build on the good work started in Nursery. Pupils set termly targets which are drawn from jotter work, assessments and class tests, self and peer evaluations, P7 pupil profiles, and raising attainment tracking meetings. Reports, open days, assemblies, displays, the school blog and newsletters provide opportunities for parents/carers to engage regularly with staff and pupils and for pupils to talk about their learning with a wider audience.

Last session, the cluster trialed a wider range of events and activities within the primary-secondary transition programme. A successful 'World of Work' week promoted a raised awareness of positive destinations, supported by local and regional businesses and employers. Activities and supports were based around real life contexts, relevant to the learning, life and work. The school worked in collaboration with the secondary school, using the new regional resource 'D&G Pathway to Employability - Developing Skills for Learning, Life and Work'. Evaluations have been collated to inform future events, with careful consideration given to a more integrated approach across the school year. By working with our cluster primaries and feeder secondary school, the school is able to provide transition events that promote relationships and challenge. These include sports events, science challenges and technology competitions. A support programme is available in conjunction with the Opportunities for All Team and Transition Co-ordinator to help those who find the transition period difficult. P7 staff work closely with pastoral staff from the secondary school to share records of learning and ensure smooth and effective experiences for all.

Pupils, staff and parents are involved in the review of IEPs. SMART targets are identified and these are reviewed regularly with learners during the term learners to highlight progress and help re-focus direction to help achieve their potential. A wide range of agencies provide support and advice for the school and families. Current partners include the Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, School Nurse, School Doctor, Community Nurse, Family Learning Coordinator, Early Learning Family Support Officer, Opportunities for All team and Social Work.

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

The Headteacher has developed a vision for the school community in consultation with all stakeholders and ensures that shared values underpin all school improvements. All staff are increasingly engaged in self-evaluation processes across the year. This takes place through observations, professional dialogue, discussions with pupils, monitoring attendance, tracking pupil progress and engagement with national documents such as 'How Good Is Our School? 4', 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?' and Building the Ambition. Leadership at all levels is actively promoted within school to build capacity. All teachers are involved in school developments, and some at cluster and regional level.


All teaching staff are involved in the process of school improvement planning which identifies good practice and builds professional confidence. Opportunities to evaluate against quality indicators and increased expectations have enabled staff to evidence progress. The Senior Management Team (SMT) has led quality improvement across the school and creates a consistent and robust approach to change. Through effective

communication and shared expectations, all staff work well together and have contributed positively to improve the quality of their work. By involving pupils and families in this process, the school is able to quantify progress with confidence and continue to improve the quality of its work. Increased opportunities for professional dialogue have improved teachers' reflection. The Headteacher actively encourages and supports all staff to participate in professional learning. Opportunities to lead learning and developments are identified regularly within school. Engagement with partners and the self-evaluation process has led to improved outcomes for learners.

The school community promotes a positive, respectful and engaging ethos. The Parent Council and Pupil Council are involved in specific decision-making and self-evaluation tasks on behalf of those they represent. All pupils and their families are regularly invited to offer their views and ideas throughout the year and feedback as a result of their input is provided to all. The Parent Council and Hecklegirth Friends Association are highly supportive of the school and eager to promote successes across the school community and beyond.

The commitment of staff and effective leadership has ensured continued good progress in addressing Education Scotland's recommendations. I congratulate all the staff and children, as well as parents and the wider school community.

Yours sincerely


Gillian Brydson
Head of Education