

Argyll and Bute Council Community Services: Education



Argyll and Bute Follow Through Report on the HMIE Inspection of Dunbeg Primary School March 2011

(HMIE Inspection Report published 2 September 2008)

This report details the outcomes of a self-evaluation exercise carried out by the staff of Dunbeg Primary School in partnership with the school's Quality Improvement Officer. The exercise focused on improvements made over the two year period since the school's HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) Inspection, which took place in June 2008 and the report for which was published in September 2008.

During the first day of the exercise, all members of staff and the representatives of pupil council and ECO group took part in discussion groups. These groups evaluated progress and suggested next steps for improvement. The themes for each group related to the HMIE points for action. Parents were involved in discussion during a parent council meeting that took place in the same week.

During the second day of the exercise, staff and the QIO worked in partnership and alongside each other to observe the school in action. The focus of these observations were agreed by staff and came from the discussions on day one. An evaluation group consisting of the head teacher, two members of staff and the QIO managed the observations and met to discuss findings, before sharing these with the rest of the staff.

The report details particular strengths of the school as identified by the staff along with the partner QIO. The report also provides details of how the school has developed their practice in relation to HMIE points for action. Finally, the report identifies areas for the school to work on in order to further improve the learning experiences of the pupils and meeting learning needs. These areas have been agreed by the staff and partner officer.

The School

At the time of the self evaluation exercise, there were 94 children attending the school, including 15 in the nursery. Primary pupils were arranged in four composite class groups. The education staff consisted of four full time teachers, including the headteacher (who has management time built in), two part time teachers, a visiting teacher of PE, one full time and one part time education and childcare worker, one classroom assistant, two pupil support assistants and an SEN Assistant. The role of principal teacher was shared by one full time and one part time member of staff. The school also had a full time janitor, a cleaner, two caterers and a clerical assistant.

Identified main strengths of the School

- Positive relationships among pupils and staff and their caring and respectful attitude towards each other.
- The role of interdisciplinary learning in improving learning experiences and providing opportunities for links with the wider school community.
- The school's approach to successfully promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- The commitment of staff to evaluating their practice, and the impact this is having on engaging pupils in their learning.

Summary of next steps

- Develop a system for tracking progress within and across CfE levels.

- Ensure planning for active learning provides for sufficient and appropriate challenge.
- Continue to develop strategies for engaging pupils in their own learning, with particular focus on personal learning planning and active learning in the early years.
- Build on improvements made to approaches to evaluating learning and teaching.

How the partnership has evaluated progress made within the chosen themes

Nursery: range of learning in numeracy and literacy; wider achievement; community involvement

Learning now takes place using the outdoor environment on a regular basis. For example, children's numeracy and maths skills are developed while working in the vegetable plot and raised beds. The growth of sunflowers was used to compare heights. The new playhouse is used as an extension of the playroom, allowing opportunities for exploration and role-play. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to using the outdoor environment.

Nursery staff use questions to help children understand numeracy concepts. Children applied numeracy skills to create bar graphs of eye colours. While making fireworks using construction materials, children were encouraged to compare length and count in context. Staff should further explore the use of questioning to challenge children's thinking.

Children's listening and talking skills are developing well within a range of learning contexts. A joint weekly session

with primary one pupils is leading to children making very good progress with their oral vocabulary. For example, while working with primary one pupils on ICT skills, nursery children were encouraged to discuss their learning and evaluate their developing social skills. Children are now encouraged to develop their understanding of contexts for writing, with some making very good progress within the early level, beyond previous expectations.

The achievements of nursery children are shared on a whole school basis at assemblies, through visits to and from other classes and in the regular nursery newsletter. Children take a full part in whole school community celebrations of learning, for example St Andrews Day, the Burns Supper and Christmas concerts. Children have benefited from regular timetabled sessions with the Music and PE specialists.

Attainment

The introduction of the Accelerated Reader programme is having an impact on motivation for and enjoyment of reading in the upper stages. Increased opportunities for pupils to write in context within interdisciplinary learning have led to improvements in achievement. The earlier introduction of functional writing skills in the nursery class has led to accelerated progress at the early level. A system for forecasting 5-14 results has been more rigorously used to ensure that pupils achieve levels more in keeping with their ability. Attainment has been accelerated in the middle to upper stages. To maintain and build on this improvement, a system of tracking progress through experiences and outcomes should now be developed.

Personal learning planning and engaging pupils in planning and reviewing learning; interdisciplinary learning

A 'Learning Story' folder is maintained for each child in the nursery class. This gives useful ongoing information on children's achievements and next steps in learning and is shared with parents. The use of floor books in the nursery allows children to reflect on their learning in relation to planned learning outcomes. The use of learning stories and floor books should be further developed through nursery into primary one to aid continuity and progress at the early level. At the middle and upper stages, each pupil reviews specific aspects of their learning and identifies next steps using a bright and concise personal learning plan format. This document is shared with parents, the majority of whom contribute to the process and appreciate information on learning targets. Pupils are proud of achieving their targets. Parents find the targets of benefit in helping them support their children at home. Staff, pupils and parents would like to review the process in order that it contributes in the most positive way possible to learning and teaching.

The introduction of interdisciplinary learning across the school has developed a strong learning community with parents, pupils, staff and other partners contributing to learning experiences. Pupils are involved in planning their learning experiences. Parents feel that projects such as World War 2, The Homecoming Games and National School Grounds Day motivated and engaged their children in their learning. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to work collaboratively across stage groups. Each interdisciplinary project culminates in a school community celebration of the learning. Planning for such projects should now focus on targeting success criteria

and learning needs and relate to tracking progress within experiences and outcomes.

Active and independent learning in the early years

Nursery and primary one children relate very well together on a weekly basis on free flow play activities. Staff should explore fully the potential for supporting and challenging children through this worthwhile arrangement. For example, early years and primary staff should work together to plan to meet the differentiated learning needs of children during this session. During a joint early years ICT session, children worked very well cooperatively and independently to complete game related tasks. Through this activity, children were developing valuable social skills. During an active maths session primary one children were well motivated and engaged in their learning, before sharing outcomes with others. The use of active learning methodologies and joint working in the early years, developing well within the present arrangement, should now be extended in order that the learning needs of children are met consistently across the early level.

Formative assessment

As a result of their membership of the school's Teaching and Learning Community (TLC), all primary staff are developing their skills in the use of formative assessment strategies.

Overall, pupils are more engaged in their learning. Pupils' thinking is challenged through good use of questioning and techniques to invite responses. Children are encouraged to take part and do so readily in discussions to solve problems. Pupils are beginning to evaluate their learning through dialogue with their teacher and self and

peer evaluation. The school should now develop their procedures to ensure that teachers' use of strategies link directly to tracking achievement within experiences and outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation

There have been significant improvements in monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching. All primary teachers are members of a Teaching and Learning Community (TLC), which meets regularly to review and reflect on methodology related to formative assessment. A non-promoted member of staff leads this group. All teachers, including the head teacher, have also buddied up to observe each other and provide feedback on strengths and development needs. The head teacher regularly visits classes during 'learning walks' and gains useful information on standards and quality. These visits will now become more focussed in order that she can provide more specific feedback to learners and teachers. These initiatives are having a clear impact throughout the school on engaging and motivating learners. As a result, teachers feel more confident at introducing innovative strategies. They feel that they are more skilled in encouraging participation and thinking.

Parents are very satisfied with the experience their children are getting at the school. They feel that the Parent Council works well in partnership with the school. Pupils confidently expressed views on their learning experiences and methodologies employed by teachers. They welcome the ways in which the school is improving their learning experiences. The school should further explore mechanisms for the pupils to contribute their views on learning, teaching and the curriculum.

Parents as partners in learning

Regular homework challenges, often related to interdisciplinary work, give a relevant context for further learning at home. Parents welcomed the increased focus on interdisciplinary projects, which gave them the opportunity to discuss their child's learning at home. An annual open morning gives parents the opportunity to work alongside their children. The school have informed parents about Curriculum for Excellence through a very well attended information evening and within the regular newsletter. Parents would like more information on how the school propose to track and report on progress within Curriculum for Excellence levels. They would like clearer guidance on how to work with their children on personal learning planning. During a wide-ranging consultation exercise, almost all parents contributed to setting the school's visions, values and aims.

Traffic management and arrival/departure arrangements for pupils

There have been significant improvements in managing children's safety when arriving and departing from the school. A barrier has been erected and clear markings laid to guide children in and out of the school well away from parking cars. Staff supervise children when departing from the school. Cooperation has been sought from parents to park away from the school entrance, and through partnership with the local church, additional parking spaces have been provided. This has proved in the main successful. The school should continue to seek cooperation from parents on this issue.

What happens next?

During the two sessions since HMIE visited the school, good progress has been made in addressing the main findings of the report, particularly with regard to setting up more rigorous and systematic self-evaluation procedures. As a result, there exists a very positive ethos for learning within which pupils' achievements and learning experiences are improving in line with national and local guidance. The annual Standards and Quality Report and Improvement Plan will outline the results of self-evaluation procedures and highlight next steps for improvement. The school and the education authority will continue to work in partnership to ensure a high quality of education for children.

Cleland Sneddon
Executive Director: Community Services
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