

3 September 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Oakbank 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; how well teachers are meeting children's different needs in lessons; how the school ensures consistency in assessing children's work; and leadership at all levels. 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?

In the nursery, children are highly motivated and engaged in their learning. They concentrate for extended periods on their chosen activities. Almost all children are involved in planning their learning. They are developing their skills in self and peer assessment. For example, they are confident in making constructive comments about their friends' drawings and other pieces of work. They are able to take on high levels of responsibility and independence. At the primary stages, almost all children are well-behaved, and settle quickly and willingly to work. They show good skills in working in groups. Achievement jotters have been successful in encouraging children to begin to reflect on their learning and record their successes. The school has identified the need for teachers to continue to improve the quality of the feedback they provide to children. This will help children understand better what they are doing well, and what they need to do to improve. Children would benefit from more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, for example through more open-ended, creative tasks. Almost all children think they are treated fairly and listened to by staff, and feel well cared for. Children have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school as Eco Warriors, Junior Road Safety Officers, Ambassadors and P1 buddies; and as members of the Health Group and the Pupil Council. They all contribute to class assemblies to share their learning with the rest of the school and with parents.

In the nursery, children are making very good progress in developing and applying their skills in early literacy and numeracy. Through their work in health and wellbeing, they are very aware of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. At the primary stages, children have achieved individual and team sporting successes in gymnastics, cross-country running, swimming, hockey and netball. Children also achieve in the expressive arts, through learning to play a range of instruments including the cello and

double bass, singing in the Boys Aloud choir, and through taking part in the Day of Dance and school shows. Children contribute well to the local community through hosting the annual visit to the school by the Friends in Retirement group, litter picking with the Viewlands Venture group, and taking part in bulb planting as part of Perth in Bloom. Children's work on environmental issues and promoting active travel to school has been recognised through the recent reaccreditation as an Eco-Schools Scotland Green Flag school, and as a Sustrans bike-friendly school. Children talk confidently in lessons and to visitors. There is scope for children at the middle and upper stages to improve further their higher-order listening and talking skills such as group discussion, and justifying opinions. At the upper stages, children can select and use information from a range of texts to support their learning across the curriculum. Children are able to write at length for a variety of purposes, often linked to real-life contexts and achievements. At the early stages, most children can work with coins to make different sums and calculate change. At the middle stages, most children have a good understanding of number, shapes and their properties and information handling. By P7, children are confident with most aspects of mathematics, including angles and percentages. They need to increase their understanding of chance and probability, databases and spreadsheets. Children's achievements in health and wellbeing have been recognised through Oakbank's recent re-accreditation as a Health Promoting School. Children are making good progress in science and in social studies.

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

In the nursery, staff take very good account of children's individual needs when planning activities. They are skilful in observing children's learning, and use the information collected to help them plan what children will learn next. At the primary stages, children's needs are met through some suitably motivating and challenging tasks. However, the pace of learning is too slow in too many lessons. A small number of higher-achieving children in P7 are benefiting from a challenging programme in maths developed in collaboration with a teacher from Perth High School. Teachers now need to ensure that tasks and activities are consistently well planned to take account of all children's differing learning needs. They need to provide appropriate challenge in learning, particularly for higher-achieving children. Classroom assistants and pupil support assistants provide a range of effective support for children in lessons. The pupil support teacher works with class teachers to plan support to meet the needs of all children.

Through its curriculum, the school aims to support children in developing skills for learning, life, and work, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Children in the nursery benefit from high-quality opportunities in health and wellbeing and social studies. Children throughout the school enjoy learning outdoors in the very attractive grounds. At the primary stages, children experience a broad, general education which includes opportunities to learn through cross-curricular themes, and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of contexts. Teachers are currently working to develop programmes in food technology and social studies. Children have benefited from improvements to the teaching of science. The school recognises the need to review teachers' approaches to planning learning for children. This will help ensure all children can make suitable progress. Parents make an important contribution, including in delivering the Bikeability programme for children in P7. The school has made a good start to implementing the '1+2' policy for modern languages by

introducing Mandarin in the nursery and P1, in addition to the French already in place for children from P5-P7. The school works well with a range of partners to support children's learning, including the Active Schools coordinator and local businesses. Staff should continue to improve transition arrangements when children move into P1 so they can build fully on the strong start in the nursery. The school has effective links with the neighbouring Perth High School which ensure children in P7 are well prepared for the transition to secondary school.

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

Since taking up her post three years ago, the headteacher has successfully encouraged teachers to become more reflective practitioners, and to play a greater role in leading improvement across the school. Teachers have had the opportunity to participate in 'learning rounds' with senior managers. This has allowed them to share practice across classes and engage in professional discussion on what they have observed. Senior managers' observations of learning and teaching now need to lead to clearer identification of next steps, for example good practice to be shared, or aspects for improvement at individual teacher or whole-school level. We have asked teachers at the primary stages to improve their approaches to assessing and tracking children's progress to ensure they achieve to their full potential. Nursery staff have been particularly effective in seeking the views of parents about their children's learning and using the information gathered to inform further developments and improvements.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident children who are keen to learn and contribute to the life of the school and its community.
- Children's learning experiences and achievements in the nursery.
- The increasing involvement of staff in leading improvement in the school.

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 develop children as independent learners who know their own strengths and what they have to do to improve.
- Ensure lessons provide suitable challenge and support to meet children's individual learning needs.
- Teachers should continue to develop their approaches to planning, assessing and tracking children's progress to ensure they achieve to their full potential.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. With support from Perth and Kinross Council and Education Scotland, the school will be able to make the necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Perth and Kinross Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice in the nursery. We shall work with the school and Perth and Kinross Council in order to record the innovative practice and share it more widely with others.

Jane B Renton
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/OakbankPrimarySchoolPerthandKinross.asp>.

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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