

13 January 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Viewlands 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 the school's approaches to meeting the needs of children with additional support needs and children's active participation in their 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?

In the school and nursery class children have a positive learning experience. Children in the nursery are highly motivated as learners and are gaining confidence and independence. They take responsibility for their own learning by choosing what and who they play with. They are particularly enthusiastic about outdoor learning in the nursery garden and are developing a range of investigative and problem-solving skills. Across the primary stages, children are eager to learn and treat one another with care and respect. They work effectively in pairs and small groups and enjoy regular opportunities to cooperate with one another. For example, children at P2 and P5 are taking on shared responsibility to improve the playground. At all stages, children understand what is to be learned, and the purpose of their work. Children told us that in some classes teachers over-explain lessons and we observed, that as a result, there is often not enough time allowed for the actual learning activity to take place. Children enjoy sharing their learning with their parents at regular learning events and through interesting 'self-directed' homework tasks. Staff are beginning to provide more opportunities for children to develop leadership skills as members of the pupil council and as buddies and captains.

Children's individual success in a wide range of sports, and other activities is highlighted well in 'Celebration Alley' and at assemblies. The endeavours of the nursery children in the garden has been recognised in an award from Beautiful Perth and the school netball team is particularly proud of their success in the Perth league. Children across the school feel a sense of community and have an awareness of the needs of others. P4 have led the school's work for the local food bank as part of their study of food and farming. Staff now need to develop more robust approaches to

tracking and monitoring children's achievements. This will help children to become more aware of the important skills they develop from these learning activities in and out of school.

In the nursery, children are making very good progress in developing literacy skills. This includes talking about books they have enjoyed and exploring early writing skills, making appointments and writing prescriptions in the nursery 'hospital'. However, at the primary stages there is scope for improvement and the school recognises that many children are capable of progressing at a quicker pace. Almost all children listen attentively and talk confidently about their learning. Children's writing is of a satisfactory standard. Older children note that they would like more frequent opportunities to work on their own on extended pieces of writing. To support improvement, there is scope to widen the range of literacy and English tasks, for example to include poetry and playscripts. Children enjoy reading in and out of school, but there is not a consistent approach to teaching reading across the school. They talk with confidence about authors they enjoy. Children in the nursery are making very good progress in numeracy. They are confident in counting when playing games, and talking about measurement when choosing materials for den building. As they move through the primary stages, there is evidence of steady progression in children's numeracy skills. Most use appropriate mathematical language and apply their mathematical knowledge well, for example in using simple coordinates to describe the position of objects on a grid. Children appreciate regular opportunities to learn about the world of finance. In P1 and P5, children could talk about accessing money from an ATM with a debit card. The recent whole-school focus on mental calculations is beginning to have a positive impact on children's confidence to tackle numeracy challenges. For example, P7 children were using subtraction of large numbers in making decisions about the design of a spacecraft. However, across the school children's attainment in mathematics should be improved and children expected to achieve more. Children in the nursery class and school have a good knowledge and understanding of health and wellbeing and the importance of healthy lifestyles. Children use information and communications technology (ICT) skills well across the curriculum and we have asked staff to ensure that tasks have sufficient challenge. Children with additional support needs have access to a range of ICT tools which they use well to support and enhance their learning. Staff recognise the need to improve the presentation and quality of children's work across the curriculum.

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

Across the school and nursery class, staff provide a very supportive and inclusive ethos that encourages children to value their achievements and ensures a positive learning environment. In the nursery, staff support children to develop and learn very well. They plan a range of relevant and challenging activities, and provide a very high level of care and encouragement. At the primary stages, in most lessons teachers plan tasks and activities well to meet the needs of individual learners. We have asked the school to ensure that learning is suitably challenging for all children, including those who are progressing well, and that the pace of learning is increased across all stages. The school's approaches to inclusion are exemplary. Children with additional support needs are included very well in all aspects of their learning and in the life of the school. This is of mutual benefit to all children in their learning at Viewlands Primary School. The depute headteacher with responsibility for support for learning

works very closely with staff, parents and partners to identify learning needs and to ensure that appropriate support is accessed when required. The school has very effective approaches to working in partnership with other agencies to support children. All staff who work with children who need extra help work effectively as a team and support children and their families very well.

Staff work hard to ensure that children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. They provide children with a range of interesting opportunities to develop their skills in health and wellbeing. They are creative in providing interesting themes which motivate children. For example, linking well-loved stories to working outdoors and protecting animals. Nursery staff involve children in planning aspects of their learning, identifying prior knowledge and areas of interest they would like to explore further. Children's learning in art and design and physical education is enhanced by the experiences provided by specialist teachers. Children also benefit from educational excursions and regular guest speakers. They fondly recall day trips to Stirling Castle and Belfast, as part of social studies topics. Children are highly motivated to develop their Scots Language vocabulary further after a recent visit from a cartoonist from 'Oor Wullie'. Staff at the primary stages recognise the need to now ensure progression, depth and challenge in children's learning across all areas of the curriculum. There are effective pastoral links when children move from nursery into P1. The school has strong links with Perth Academy and Fairview School, ensuring that children build on their learning when they move on from Viewlands Primary School. Staff are continuing to refine and improve these transition arrangements.

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

The school has experienced a number of changes to the leadership team, and staff and parents now welcome stability and continuity. The senior leadership team has a renewed determination to improve the work of the school. They now have a clear and shared understanding of the action required to provide children with the best learning experiences the school can offer. The headteacher and her staff know the strengths and development needs of the school well. They have reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the senior team to build on strengths and interests and to enable a closer focus on improving children's progress from nursery to P7. Together, they visit the nursery class and primary stages regularly to monitor learning and are increasing in confidence in providing staff with helpful feedback to improve. Most staff take on leadership roles to improve children's learning experiences, including leading curricular developments and approaches to learning and teaching. In a few classes, children use self and peer assessment well. The school tracks and monitors children's progress in numeracy and mathematics, and aspects of literacy and English language. This needs to be extended to other areas of the curriculum. The school gathers information through consultation with staff, children and parents. Most parents are happy with the work of the school but seek assurance that their views are taken account of. The school should continue to ensure that the outcomes of its self-evaluation processes are acted upon timeously to inform and improve children's learning. With the continuing support of the local authority, the headteacher and her staff are well placed to lead the school and to raise standards further.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Very high quality learning experiences in the nursery class.
- Well-mannered, articulate, friendly, caring children who have a zest for tackling all areas of the curriculum.
- Creative staff team who are all committed to improving children's learning and their own professional learning.
- The school's commitment to inclusion, and arrangements and success in meeting the needs of children with additional needs.

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 the curriculum to bring about improvement in children's learning and to raise attainment.
- Continue to use self-evaluation approaches to implement agreed improvements effectively.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

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 visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Perth and Kinross Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Susan Duff
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/ViewlandsPrimarySchoolPerthandKinross.asp>

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