

Local Authority Report to Education Scotland

Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class

October 2019



Background

In November 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class setting out a number of areas for improvements agreed by the school and Moray Council following full model inspection in September 2017. This inspection visit focused on QI 1.3 (*Leadership of Change*), QI 2.3 (*Learning, Teaching and Assessment*), QI 3.1 (*Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion*) and QI 3.2 (*Raising Attainment and Achievement; Securing children's progress for Nursery*), all evaluated as 'weak'. Joined in partnership on inspection with the Care Inspectorate for Nursery Class inspection, 'weak' evaluations were arrived at for *Quality of Care and Support*, *Quality of Environment*, *Quality of Staffing* and *Quality of Management and Leadership* with a number of requirements and recommendations identified, since met. As a result, Education Scotland intimated intention to return to carry out a further inspection of Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class within 12 months from initial inspection. Care Inspectorate have continued to engage with the school in relation to the nursery in line with their own inspection processes and reviewing arrangements.

In September 2017, the following strengths and areas for improvement in the school's work were identified:

Strengths:

- Friendly, capable children who are eager to learn and ready to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- The effectiveness of teamwork in meeting the individual needs of children who face barriers to learning within 'The Base' and their specialist knowledge and application of a range of strategies which is resulting in improved outcomes for children.
- The motivation and commitment of practitioners in the nursery to deepen their knowledge to develop further the quality of provision for young children.

Areas for Improvement:

- Senior leaders should give clearer leadership and direction to the school, including how staff improve the work of the school.
- Continue to develop a positive school community, built on a culture of mutual respect and effective teamwork.
- Develop high quality learning, teaching and assessment approaches, informed by current educational thinking, to ensure children are engaged in appropriately motivating and challenging learning experiences.
- Improve the planning, tracking and monitoring of children's work across the school and nursery to ensure that children's work helps them improve their attainment. Raise attainment across the school.
- Implement the requirements, recommendations and areas for development as identified within the Care Inspectorate findings.

In November 2018, Education Scotland returned to visit Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class, with a further letter to parents/carers published in January 2019. This return visit focused on the areas for improvement identified in September 2017 inspection outlined above, reporting on school improvement made in relation to these areas.

Following this return visit, it was noted that the school had made progress since the original inspection and as such, Education Scotland would ask for a report on progress from Moray Council within nine months of inspection. This report would then inform any decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement which may include another inspection visit. Joined by Care Inspectorate, improvements were noted under the Care Inspectorate framework with *Quality of Care and Support (Adequate)*, *Quality of Environment (Good)*, *Quality of Staffing (Good)* and *Quality of Management and Leadership (Adequate)* gradings received.

This local authority report forms the report on progress requested by Education Scotland following return visit in November 2018. Progress outlined below is based on 'Areas for Improvement' identified in the September 2017 inspection as set out in the November 2017 inspection report, further reviewed and evaluated in November 2018 revisit (letter to parents/carers published in January 2019). School self-evaluation, classroom visits and discussions with pupils and staff form the basis for this report following authority report visit on Tuesday, 18 June 2019 to Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class. On Wednesday, 18 September 2019, attainment focus groups supported by our local authority Primary Advisor were undertaken with pupils nearing or having achieved milestone CfE levels at P1 (Early level), P4 (1st level) and P7 (2nd level) stages in order to ascertain robust nature of practitioner CfE judgements.

School Context

Hythehill Primary School is a non-denominational Primary School situated in Lossiemouth, set within extensive school grounds. Opened in 1965, Hythehill Primary School is an integral part of the Lossiemouth community it serves with links made over the years with forces families beyond local community, the Royal Air Force Lossiemouth base being in close proximity to the school. The catchment area of the school covers the west side of the town and surrounding rural areas to the west and south of Lossiemouth. The Head Teacher has used devolved funds well over four years in post in order to maintain the school and surrounding grounds which include a Nursery, Enhanced Provision Base, thirteen classrooms, food technology room, ICT suite, general purpose areas, a large hall and outdoor areas including pitches, basketball courts, grassed playing areas, wildlife garden and outdoor learning spaces.

At the end of session 2018/2019, school roll stands at 306 pupils with 108 pupils marked as having an Additional Support Need (ASN), equating to 35% of the school roll. Of this roll, 33% are from an Armed Forces family background. At census (September 2019), ASN currently stands at 42.7% of school roll, armed forces family pupils at 59.5% highlighting changing nature of school profile and enhanced recording arrangements. This is notably above authority averages for both ASN and armed forces family backgrounds.

Commentary against areas for improvement identified are now made below, using Education Scotland core headings reported on January 2019 inspection revisit as a structure.

Area for Improvement 1

Senior leaders should give clearer leadership and direction to the school, including how staff improve the work of the school.

The Head Teacher supported by the Senior Leadership Team continues to drive forward change and improvement in line with the refreshed school vision and values. Led by the Head Teacher, the school has clear direction with leadership of change supported by individuals and groups from across the school community. The Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team continue to work in partnership with the local authority following November 2018 visit. The Quality Improvement Manager (Moray West) continues to support and challenge school improvement activities, ensuring improvement agenda continues at pace.

An updated School Improvement Action Plan continues to frame School Improvement Activities with regular formal reporting to the Head of Education on planned changes undertaken in support of learner attainment and achievement. A similar action planning format, quality assurance process and reporting system is used for Nursery also. With increased ownership by the school following November 2018 revisit, priorities continue to reflect improvements required to raise attainment and achievement for all learners. The Senior Leadership Team ensure these remain current and pertinent on a daily basis, involving staff across the school in their progress and review.

School vision and values following refresh and review are embedding as part of school life, with school community ownership ever increasing as reflected through class and school charters, underpinning school reward “SHINE” points (replacing House Points) and in wider aspects of school life. This includes through wider community engagement events, working in partnership with parents and through family learning and open afternoon events. Staff are central to improvement including through review of the school’s Curriculum Rationale in order to ensure Hythehill’s curriculum is reflective of the unique context of the school alongside the four context of learning, reflective of the CfE design principles and features as outlined in recently refreshed narrative around Curriculum for Excellence.

Staff across the school are empowered to bring the curriculum to life through well planned and consistent high quality learning and teaching experiences using refreshed planning and observation formats in use. This is supporting improvements in learning and teaching approaches and supporting new members of staff in reflection, informing career-long professional development activities and professional reading. Following appointment of a substantive Depute Headteacher in April 2019, Senior Leadership Team remits have been reviewed to ensure best fit with skills-set of senior leaders. This has led to improvements in learning and teaching approaches, resources in use and identification of talents of staff across the school to lead forwards change and improvement. This has included areas such as ethos and environment, Health and Wellbeing, Numeracy, family learning, positive behaviour and wider experiences.

In the Nursery, improvement continues at pace as led by one of the Depute Headteacher’s working with the Head Teacher. This has involved close partnership working with nursery staff, identifying training needs and professional learning opportunities to enhance learning experiences. Notable improvements to the physical environment have been undertaken in order to support outdoor learning, loose parts play and enhanced use of natural materials. Following planning in the moment training, pupil voice is now supporting planning and documenting evidence of learning and progression across the year. Quality assurance is embedded as part of the self-evaluation cycle with improvement plans reflective of school improvements also required. With Care Inspectorate requirements and recommendations met with notable improvements in Care Inspectorate gradings, it is anticipated that the Nursery will be handed over as part of Phase 3 Moray Early Years Expansion Project in June 2020 to the identified local authority Nursery Manager with grading of good or better across Care Inspectorate quality indicators.

Staff, parent and pupil voice are central to improvements, supporting learning experiences as highlighted in Area for Improvement 3 below. Fully embracing national guidance including How good is our school (4), How good is our Early Learning and Childcare, Building the Ambition and development of play-based learning/curriculum, practitioners and senior leaders are using information gathered through a range of self-evaluation approaches to measure improvements for next steps.

Framed by the Working Time Agreement, reviewed as the year progresses, Quality Assurance and collegiate activities are planned and in support of improvement. This includes cross-Associated Schools Group (ASG) moderation activities in support of literacy and numeracy teacher professional judgements across levels. Staff continue to embrace the Moray Tracker for mapping learner attainment and analyse data for interventions for individuals, groups and cohorts. Staff have grown in confidence in use of data, with clear picture of pupil progress, attainment and achievement noted.

A key focus of the school's improvement journey remains on data-led improvements in order to support interventions for high quality learning and teaching.

Area for Improvement 2

Continue to develop a positive school community, built on a culture of mutual respect and effective teamwork.

Staff continue to embrace active leadership roles within the school as noted in Area for Improvement 1 above, with a positive ethos and culture of partnership working across the school. Staff across stages work together on a range of working group, planning and moderation activities including with partner-schools within the Associated Schools Group. Non-teaching staff have supported literacy and numeracy developments for identified groups of pupils in areas including Emerging Literacy and SEAL (Stages of Early Arithmetical Learning) assessment for intervention. PEF monies have supported a number of improvements in Literacy and Numeracy with separate PEF action plan using data baseline for improvement and identification of need.

Review of Working Time Agreement has allowed for increased time for collegiate discussion and collaborative working across all levels. This has ensured strategic improvements required have continued at pace and improvements in pedagogy and practice remain at the heart of all at Hythehill. Communication is open across the school with ongoing review by senior leaders of context related data to ensure appropriate distillation of key messages regarding pupils to all staff.

Pupil voice and participation has extended this session with pupils deciding on groups they would like to join with democratic voting processes for House Captains extending pupil leadership and voice. The school is at the early stages of making use of How Good is OUR School (HGIOURS) with plans to join in with the Young Leaders of Learning programme in support of improvements to learning and teaching, further strengthening pupil voice in leaning and improvement.

Working with Head Teachers from neighbouring Associated Schools Groups, recent success in a tri-ASG bid for additional funding for military families has been achieved in support of Health and Wellbeing of children and families. A further bid for monies for extended counselling and family support is underway in order to support children, their families and readiness to learn and achieve.

Hythehill Primary School and Nursery - from internal self-evaluation undertaken - is now viewed more positively by learners and staff, with increasing engagement from wider families and community through planned engagement and learning events. Hythehill Primary School staff have also supported staff in wider Moray looking outwards for support in areas such as tracking and monitoring, curriculum, wellbeing and interventions. School self-evaluation highlights positive perception of the school as a community moving forwards among all key stakeholders, with positive impact realised across a range of school improvement priorities.

Area for Improvement 3

Develop high quality learning, teaching and assessment approaches, informed by current educational thinking, to ensure children are engaged in appropriately motivating and challenging learning experiences.

Staff across the school have embedded revised planning formats in support of consistency of learners' experiences with progressions folders supporting staff in their planning. During non-contact times, a teachers' 'Planning Room' has been provided and equipped with ICT equipment and resources for staff to plan in collaboration with others. Focus on Numeracy (Mental Maths) was identified by the school as an

area of priority leading to development of a mental maths progression and homework packs in order to strengthen learning.

Teachers across the school are embracing “Our Moray Standard” local authority learning and teaching strategy and infographic, in support of improved consistency in high quality learning and teaching. Having engaged with key education research and supporting development of “Our Moray Standard”, a shared language for learning across the school continues to embed at pace. The school recognise that further work is required in sharing CfE levels achieved with pupils with self and peer assessment activities and reflection on learning embedding as part of the learning cycle.

Teachers continue to grow in confidence through moderation activities, tracking and monitoring in their judgements of learner level achievement. Teachers are increasingly gathering assessment information through naturally occurring classroom based activities in support of assessment judgements and use in the moment feedback in order to guide learner next steps. Inputs by senior leaders and staff on key areas including pace, challenge and differentiation are supporting development of learning experiences matched to learner interests and improving abilities. Teachers know children in their classes well, attainment information and wider pupil related data in order to plan learning activities sensitive to levels of support and challenge required in most classes.

Hythehill Primary School piloted authority learning observation toolkits with feedback informing positive and agreed changes for pan-authority roll-out. Staff make use of learning observation formats to observe practice and coach through next steps for improving learning experiences. This has supported growing consistency in teaching approaches including use of learning intentions and success criteria, differentiation, feedback, learning and teaching methodology variety and approaches to learning (including pupil-led learning). Learning conversations now take place as a natural part of the learning process with continued focus on their development, including in the moment feedback and dialogue. Good practice is shared across the school with practitioners keen to support one another in improvement across all stages of Education Scotland’s Moderation Cycle.

Staff continue to work together for improvement in children’s progress and attainment in literacy (Writing in particular, Reading at middle-upper stages) and Numeracy (Mental Maths noted as an area for intervention across the school). Emerging Literacy approaches continue to support early development with SEAL assessment used to support numeracy gap identification for support interventions. Through more effective tracking and monitoring of pupil progress, learners are supported and challenged more commensurate to level of need. The school make use of a range of formative and summative assessment data – including PiPs, InCAS and SNSA – to inform Teacher Professional Judgements and for identifying attainment gaps for addressing. The school recognise the need to extend family learning in the school and extend individual learning pathways further, extending learner understanding of progress further.

In the Nursery shared learning events and family learning sessions are supporting learner development. Pre-school transition to P1 is planned with pupil independence and leadership of learning and environmental experiences encouraged. Training on planning in the moment has supported embedding of Thinking Talking Floorbooks as evidence of breadth and challenge of learning experiences. Thinking Talking Floorbooks capture pupil voice on learning and wider Nursery experiences with increased profile of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing through planned learning experiences. New progression frameworks and trackers are now in place and reflect pupil-led dialogue for building knowledge of learning and progress over time with further shaping of the curriculum, progressions, planning, tracking and monitoring of pupils progress and achievement of key skills underway.

In June 2019, learning visits were undertaken to all classes. As a snapshot in time, the following evaluative commentary is provided:

A positive and mutually respectful ethos was evident across most classes, developing the four capacities in learners in a variety of learning contexts, well planned by teaching staff. Teachers made natural links to the world of work and careers in the majority of lessons visited, with some creative learning contexts observed in teaching of expressive arts and social studies based learning including inter-disciplinary learning.

In most classes visited, Learning Intentions and Success Criteria were shared and with regards to Success Criteria, understood by children. Success criteria were co-created with children in less than half of lessons. In almost all lessons, Learning Intentions and Success Criteria were revisited using a variety of methods including class teacher dialogue and through self and peer assessment activities. In a few lessons, Learning Intentions and Success Criteria were differentiated by group/children, supporting and challenging learning further.

In the majority of classes, Success Criteria linked to the Learning Intentions. In a few lessons, success criteria were 'givens'/structural, not fully related to learning intentions. In less than half of lessons, children were not fully aware of skills under development through learning activities.

A range of learning and teaching activities as identified above were observed including direct teacher instruction, individual and group tasks, self and peer assessment opportunities, Literacy (Writing, Reading), Numeracy (Mental Maths), Science, structured/free flow play, worksheets, jotter work, use of digital technology for learning, station based approaches, pupil-based learning, outdoor learning, active learning. In most classes, almost all children were engaged in their learning with almost all children exhibiting respectful and positive behaviours in line with school "SHINE" values and class charters. Across stages, there was evidence of good planning in support of learning experiences.

Learning activities in the majority of lessons were differentiated in order to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners and learning needs. In most lessons, learners appeared to find learning and teaching activities to be appropriately challenging and enjoyable with appropriate pace. In less than half of lessons, learners were further empowered to choose how they approached learning activities.

In most lessons, feedback supported next steps in learning with children spoken with keen to share their work and areas for improvement. Teachers in most lessons advocated instant verbal feedback for understanding, supporting learning. In the majority of lessons, teachers provided verbal feedback throughout learning and teaching activities to individual pupils, groups and whole class. Opportunities for self and peer assessment were evident in the majority of classes through activities, jotter work reviewed and learning experiences underway. In a number of classes, teachers had planned exciting contexts for learning including "Titanic" and outdoor learning experiences to provide for challenge and enjoyment in learning.

Pupil Support colleagues ensured learners were supported well in their learning, complimenting class teacher inputs where learners did not discriminate between teaching and non-teaching staff when in need of support. Across classes, children were included in learning activities underway with almost all participating in learning.

Practitioners across the school recognise the need to continuously review practice and extend learner experiences to ensure sufficient pace, challenge and differentiation for all. With increased school focus on improvements to learning and teaching and with refreshing addition of new staff, children are encouraged to achieve across the school.

Area for Improvement 4

Improve the planning, tracking and monitoring of children's work across the school and nursery to ensure that children's work helps them improve their attainment. Raise attainment across the school.

Curriculum progressions including Literacy and Numeracy have been reviewed and implemented by staff across the school, working together in order to ensure curriculum coverage, depth and progression across stages. Supporting planning using revised planning formats – shared with other Moray schools as they have looked outwards – assessment is planned as part of learning to inform judgements on progress and achievement. Staff have worked together during collegiate times on differentiation strategies in order to meet the needs of learners with moderation supporting practitioner confidence in achievement of a level decision making. Use of Emerging Literacy assessment alongside PiPs (P1), InCAS (P2, P3, P5 and P6) and SNSA (P1, P4, P7) highlight improvements in learner performance, knowledge and skills with further diagnostics supporting teacher professional judgments for interventions in support and challenge of learning further.

Tracking and monitoring is undertaken using the Moray BGE Tracker tool, supporting early intervention on identification of learners across stages in need of support or challenge in learning. This has further supported learning conversations with children with more individual target setting enabled through reporting to families and parents structures in place. Numeracy and Maths continues to be an area of focus with tracking attainment meetings supporting dialogue between class teacher and Senior Leaders in raising attainment for all.

The school and practitioners have access to a wide range of formative and summative assessment information including diagnostic assessments, school-developed assessments and SNSA. While not aligned to benchmarks, the latter provides useful diagnostic information for planning learning and teaching including learning gaps for further reinforcement for cohorts and individual pupils/groups of pupils. The school are tracking pupil progress and put in place interventions in a timely manner, including recovery interventions for transient pupils. PEF funding is used to support targeted groups in Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing. As a result, Teacher Professional Judgment as witnessed through ACEL is improving overall with value added as evidenced through various diagnostic assessments.

As outlined in Areas for Improvement 1 and 3, notable improvements to planning, tracking and monitoring of learners' experiences in the Nursery have been undertaken with extended curriculum experiences offered. Children now make good progress with clear plans moving forwards as the Nursery moves to Phase 3 handover to the Moray Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Team in August 2020. Nursery practitioners have undertaken training in observations and use the National Improvement Hub three part resource for observations, focusing on progress and next steps in learning for clarity of individual pupil development. They have also implemented and embedded new progression frameworks and trackers to reflect pupil-led dialogue for building knowledge of learning over time (evidence based through Thinking Talking Floorbooks) focusing beyond recording of initial experiences. The Nursery continue to work with the Early Years Field Officers and Early Years Expansion Team in order to further shape the curriculum, progressions, planning, tracking and monitoring of pupil progress for achievement of key skills, enacting ongoing improvements and strengthening practice. The school also have plans to ensure the Nursery remains an integral partner following transition to new leadership and management arrangements.

Noted improvements in attainment have been realised and noted across the school, with emerging positive data trends across stages. In summary:

- Continued improvements in Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking at Early level, overall above NIF Stretch Aim and in line with Moray Average per ACEL data. Numeracy continues to be a focus area for improvement as identified by the school, marginally below Moray average

- Favourable and positive achievement of children in P1 SNSA, exceeding Moray averages overall
- Continued improvement in Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking, and Numeracy at 1st level, exceeding NIF Stretch Aim and Moray averages
- Overall, noted positive achievement of children in P4 SNSA exceeding Moray averages overall with areas for improvement noted and underway in Writing and Numeracy
- Overall, Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking are above NIF Stretch Aims for Literacy, Listening and Talking above Moray average.
- Writing and Numeracy identified as a focus area per school improvement action planning over the past two years with recovery and interventions in place across a number of stages with noted improvements identified through school assessment information, PiPs and InCAS data sets
- The school have supported a range of learners with identified ASN and forces background contexts (issues of transience) in addressing learning gaps for raising attainment, supported by PEF
- Practitioners continue to engage in moderation activities across aspects of Education Scotland's Moderation Cycle as a school and Associated School Group in literacy and numeracy. Attainment focus groups highlighted strength of Teacher Professional Judgements (TPJ) overall
- The school – as outlined in Area for Improvement 4 – have rigorous systems, processes and arrangements for data analysis and interrogation in place at all levels, in support of raising attainment and closing identified attainment gaps at individual pupil, group, cohort and school levels

Area for Improvement 5

Implement the requirements, recommendations and areas for development as identified within the Care Inspectorate findings.

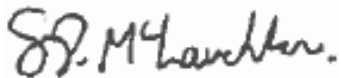
All requirements and recommendations from the Care Inspectorate were previously met. The Care Inspectorate continue to engage with the Nursery as part of their inspection and review processes. Hythehill Primary School and Nursery have rigorous quality assurance and Nursery Improvement Action Plans in place linked to Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland advice and post-inspection findings reflective of the wider school.

Next Steps

Following review of school progress to date and inspection findings with next steps identified, Hythehill Primary School and Nursery class continues to make progress at good pace since the original inspection in September 2017 and revisit in November 2018.

Working collegiately and led by the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team, positive change has resulted to school ethos, quality of learner's experiences, leadership at all levels, learning and teaching. Improvements continue to be evidenced through improving data presented as cohorts move through the school. The school have strong mechanisms in place in order to identify attainment gaps with planned interventions in place and under development in order to address these gaps. Clear actions for improvement have been acted upon with next steps identified for further improvements over time.

We are confident that Hythehill Primary School and Nursery has capacity for continued improvement with ongoing support and challenge from the local authority. This will continue at pace as has been evidenced over the past two years with further improvements to attainment over time anticipated in review of data trends emerging.



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