

# Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class

## Education Scotland Continuing Engagement Inspection Visit (November 2018) following initial inspection (September 2017 as reported in November 2017)

### Authority commentary

#### 1 *Background*

Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class was initially inspected in September 2017 (Inspection report published, November 2017) as reported previously to Children and Young People's Services Committee on 7 March 2018 (para 13 of the minute refers) by a team of inspectors from Education Scotland, joined by the Care Inspectors working in partnership with Education Scotland for inspection of the Nursery Class. During the full week visit, Education Scotland inspectors talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the Headteacher and staff.

Education Scotland gathered evidence to enable them to evaluate aspects of the quality of leadership and children's achievements. The Education Scotland school inspection team at that time used selected Quality Indicators (QIs) from "How good is our school? 4<sup>th</sup> edition" (HGIOS4), rated using the six-point scale. These are:

- QI 1.3 Leadership of change
- QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
- QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement
- QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

Full establishment inspections also include focus on QI 2.1 Safeguarding and themes from other QIs to ensure Inspectors continue to capture the evidence needed to promote improvement and provide evidence to inform national policy development. These are not assigned a rating:

- QI 2.2 Curriculum (Learning Pathways theme)
- QI 2.7 Partnerships (Partnerships in evaluating the impact of parental engagement)

A further QI is also chosen by the school in full establishment inspections (not assigned a rating). Hythehill Primary School selected full QI 2.6: Transitions.

Hythehill Primary School also has a Nursery Class. Education Scotland inspectors also used QIs from "How good is our early learning and childcare" (HGIOELC) to evaluate performance of the Nursery. These QIs are:

- 1.3 Leadership of change
- 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
- 3.2 Securing children's progress

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

The Care Inspectorate, involved in a shared inspection of the Nursery class with Education Scotland, publish their gradings based on the following quality themes with supporting statements. These themes are:

- Quality of care and support
- Quality of environment
- Quality of staffing
- Quality of management and leadership

## 2 *September 2017 – Education Scotland Inspection Visit (Inspection report published November 2017)*

In September 2017 with inspection findings published in November 2017, Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class were rated as weak across all Education Scotland QIs and Care Inspectors Themes noted above that are reported upon.

Education Scotland liaised with Moray Council thereafter regarding the school's capacity to improve and intimated their intention to carry out a further inspection of the school in discussion with Moray Council within a year of report publication (report published November 2017, return visit anticipated to be November 2018).

In September 2017, the inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work:

- 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.

The following areas for improvement were agreed with the Headteacher and a representative from Moray Council:

- 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. 7 requirements and 2 recommendations were identified by the Care Inspectorate at that time.

### 3 *Post-inspection support and change*

Senior Leaders and staff have worked together in addressing key areas for improvement, supporting positive changes and leading forwards improvements to learning and teaching, and curriculum. Hythehill Primary School Senior Leadership Team and staff have worked in partnership with the local authority, the latter providing support and challenge of school improvement agenda and activities. This has included support in preparing a comprehensive School Improvement Action Plan in order to address the key areas for improvement, targeted support for school improvement areas and rigorous School Improvement Action Planning Reporting and critique. Additional targeted support has included supplementing school approaches to self-evaluation for self-improvement, developing systems for tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and achievements, increased rigour through a comprehensive QIO learning visit programme for supporting learning and teaching, and provision of wider school support.

### 4 *November 2018 – Education Scotland Continuing Engagement Inspection Visit (joint revisit of Nursery with the Care Inspectorate)*

Education Scotland returned to inspect Hythehill Primary School and Nursery Class (Continuing Engagement) in November 2018 focusing on the five areas for improvement agreed in the September 2017 inspection. The Care Inspectorate also working in partnership with Education Scotland inspectors, in inspection revisit of the Nursery class.

Through this inspection visit, it is noted that the Headteacher and senior leadership team have worked closely with the local authority to improve the leadership and work of the school since the last inspection. Despite significant changes to staffing within the school, the Headteacher has worked hard to bring about improvement, ensuring the involvement of all staff. As a result, staff are more confident about initiating and leading change.

The school's vision and values have been refreshed, fully involving parents, children and staff. There is now a shared understanding of how these are being used across the school and nursery to inform school improvement. The strategic planning for change is clearly linked to the priorities set out as a result of the last inspection. The senior leadership team and local authority have monitored the progress towards meeting the priorities regularly. This is providing a clearer understanding of the school and nursery's strengths and areas that require further development.

Within the school, more accurate information about children's attainment is beginning to be provided following the introduction of a new tracking system. Staff confidence in using this information to inform their planning for improvement is beginning to increase.

Staff report a significant change within the culture and ethos across the school. Almost all feel valued and treated with respect. Across the school, staff feel their

views are listened to and acted upon and there is an increased sense of teamwork. There has been an increase in collaborative working across primary classes. Staff welcome these opportunities for professional dialogue and feel that this is informing their practice. There is scope for staff working across early level to work more closely together to ensure children make sustained progress in their learning.

Opportunities for pupil voice have increased. Children have welcomed the opportunity to select their own house captain and vice-captains, and choose which pupil voice group they would like to join. Children are ready and able to take increasing ownership of these opportunities and make a greater contribution to the school community and school improvement.

With clear leadership from the Headteacher, staff have been encouraged to reflect more on the quality of their practice in teaching and assessment. The Headteacher has created more opportunities for teachers to talk together about learning and teaching. Overall, teachers recognise and value the time for this professional dialogue. As a result, this is beginning to bring about improvements and more consistency in elements of practice.

Within the nursery, practitioners have reviewed the daily routine to provide more time and space for children to move freely between indoors and outdoors. As a result of this, children are independent and confident to make decisions about their play. Significant improvements to the learning environment are resulting in children having access to a wider range of natural materials and everyday objects. This is improving children's early literacy and numeracy, problem-solving skills and imaginary play.

With valuable support from the local authority, the Headteacher has supported staff to begin to develop a more systematic approach to assessing children's progress. Staff have implemented a new system to track children's progress in learning. Working in partnership with colleagues from other schools, teachers are gaining confidence in making more accurate judgements of children's attainment.

The school has correctly identified that children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics needs to improve significantly. Staff have made a positive start to improving approaches to mental mathematics. Children at all stages of the school now benefit from a daily programme of active activities and games to reinforce and improve their mental agility.

The requirements and recommendations from the Care Inspectorate findings have been met.

## 5 *Next steps*

Education Scotland have noted that Hythehill Primary School and Nursery has made progress since the original inspection. Education Scotland will ask for a report on progress within nine months of the inspection. This local authority report will inform any future decision made by Education Scotland regarding further engagement which may include another inspection visit, subject to continued progress. When such a decision is made, Education Scotland will write to parents/carers once again, detailing further improvements the school has made and outlining any further action, agreed with Moray Council, that Education Scotland intend to take.

In order to further support the school, a revised School Improvement Action Plan has been prepared in partnership with the local authority following Continuing Engagement visit in November 2018. A separate Nursery Improvement Action Plan linked to the School Improvement Action Plan has also been created for increased clarity and focus.

Working in partnership with local authority central Education Officers, the school continue to maintain focus at pace on this improvement agenda. Staff at Hythehill Primary School and Nursery continue to be fully committed to actions identified by Education Scotland, working collegiately together in order to support school improvement for all.

In August 2019, a local authority report will be prepared and submitted to Education Scotland, detailing further progress made on improvement actions identified for review and action by Education Scotland as appropriate. This will include reporting on progress on areas identified in the inspection report including: raising attainment, learning and teaching, differentiation of learning activities, learner self-reflection and target setting, continued nursery improvements and learner progression in learning.

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