

Education, Children and Families Committee

Sub-committee on Standards for Children and Families

2.30 pm, Monday, 8 June 2015

Primary School Inspection at Sighthill Primary School and Nursery Class

Item number	5.1
Report number	
Wards	Ward 3: Drumbrae/Gyle Ward 6: Corstorphine/Murrayfield

Links

Coalition pledges	PO5
Council outcomes	CO2
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

Gillian Tee

Director of Children and Families

Contact: Janice MacInnes, Quality Improvement Manager (Primary)

E-mail: janice.macinnes@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 6268

Executive summary

Primary School Inspection at Sighthill Primary School and Nursery Class

Summary

- Members should be aware that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), now known as Education Scotland (ES), undertake an annual sample of inspections across Scotland (approximately 240 per year) covering nursery, primary, special and secondary schools. A letter to parents/carers on each inspection is published approximately three months after the inspection. On the basis of this letter the school with the support of the authority amends its improvement plan to take account of any agreed areas for improvement.
- Inspectors usually revisit a school within a year of the publication of the letter where weak or unsatisfactory practice has been identified. For all other schools inspected the local authority will inform the parents about the progress made in improving the quality of education.
- This letter (Appendix 1) and evaluations (Appendix 2) advises the Sub-committee on the outcomes of the initial inspection.

Recommendations

The Sub-committee is requested to:

- note the findings of the report including the areas where the education authority and the school should continue to improve the school; and
- receive an authority inspection follow through report within one year of the publication of the inspection letter.

Measures of success

The report identified the following key strengths:

- enthusiastic children who are keen to learn and are proud of their school;
- children's high-quality art work which is valued and displayed attractively throughout the school;
- staff who provide a nurturing atmosphere and have high expectations for children to do well; and

- very effective partnerships within and beyond the school which support and extend children’s learning.

Financial impact

There are no financial implications contained in the ES report.

Equalities impact

There are considered to be no infringements of the rights of the child.

Tracking of pupil performance by gender and Black Minority Ethnic (BME) is undertaken at school level and there are no adverse impacts.

Sustainability impact

None.

Consultation and engagement

Parents, pupils and staff completed an ES questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Background reading / external references

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports>

Gillian Tee

Director of Children and Families

Links

Coalition pledges	PO5
Council outcomes	CO2
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3
Appendices	1. Inspection letter to parent/carers 2. Evaluations

13 January 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Sighthill Primary School and Nursery Class
The City of Edinburgh 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 outdoor learning and the expectations staff have of children. 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 class, children eagerly take part in a wide range of motivating activities both indoors and outside. They play together well and use resources and equipment imaginatively and creatively. They particularly enjoy their time exploring in the garden where they persevere with tasks and find solutions to simple problems. Staff help children to develop their independence, but most children are capable of taking more responsibility, for example during snack time and when planning and reflecting on the activities they take part in. Most children speak confidently and staff skilfully help to build children's spoken vocabulary. Children enjoy practising their early writing skills at different activities around the playroom, for example by sending imaginary letters to the autumn fairy. Children learn to count through songs and rhymes and most can count to ten and beyond. Through a well-structured programme of physical education, children are developing very good physical skills in running and balancing.

In the primary classes, teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour and achievement and almost all children respond by working hard and behaving well. Most children are enthusiastic learners, keenly sharing their ideas with each other and their teachers. All teachers provide different ways for children to learn through practical activities. The best lessons are well organised, move at a brisk pace and involve children in meaningful activities, but this is not yet consistent enough across all classes. We have asked the school to make sure that children's learning in every class is of a consistently high standard. Children appreciate the valuable opportunities they have to learn outdoors, in the school grounds and in Westburn Woods. These high-quality experiences are inspiring children to learn and helping them to solve problems and to manage risks in real-life situations. The school provides many activities which some children would not otherwise experience. For example, children

enjoy visits to the theatre, sporting venues, and cultural events and this motivates a few children to go on to achieve success at a local and national level. Children have an understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle. A breakfast club provides a nutritious start to the day for over thirty children. Staff build children's self-confidence in many effective ways, helping children to understand and talk about their feelings and emotions. From the early stages, children develop strategies to help them learn independently, for example by reflecting on their strengths. Teachers check children's understanding but not all teachers provide children with high-quality feedback and ensure that children use this to improve their work. Teachers are looking at how they can improve the way individual children set themselves goals for improvement and we have asked them to continue with this work.

At the primary stages, most children read well and are making good progress. The school has implemented many successful ways for children to improve their reading skills, including introducing supportive programmes to help those children who find reading difficult. Consequently, many children read widely for pleasure and enjoy visiting the local library. With increasing confidence, children discuss their favourite books and the style of different authors. The school is taking part in an initiative which is successfully enriching children's written and spoken vocabulary. Children write for different purposes, such as letters, stories and science reports, but too often they are asked to write only short answers on worksheets. They need more opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing, and apply more accurately their knowledge of punctuation and spelling. In mathematics, children make satisfactory progress. The school recognises that children need help to develop their skills in mental calculations and need more challenging opportunities to solve mathematical problems in real-life situations. In science, children in P1 are learning about different materials and their properties and, at P4, children can wire simple circuits to light bulbs. Across the school, children's art is of a particularly high standard. The work they produce provides attractive displays of drawings, paintings, models and sculptures which help to demonstrate their creative skills and make the school bright and colourful.

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

Staff in the nursery and primary classes provide a safe and nurturing climate in which children can develop and learn. They build children's confidence and self-esteem in many effect ways and encourage them to have high ambitions for their futures. For example, a link with The University of Edinburgh is allowing older children to spend time on a campus, experiencing lectures and talking with students and staff. This is helping them see how they might benefit from higher education when they are older. Relationships between staff and children are positive and mostly respectful. Children also support each other well. For example, older children take responsibility for buddying, and running clubs for younger children to practise their reading. The school has fostered strong relationships with other professionals, such as therapists, psychologists and colleagues from children's charities to support those children who need help to make progress. A teacher and a support assistant provide valuable help for children whose first language is not English. An experienced support for learning teacher has recently taken up post and is working well with the headteacher and staff. Together they have begun to improve arrangements to ensure all children receive the support they require. We agree with the school's plans to make better use of the skills of support assistants so that more children can benefit from the extra help they

provide. Teachers diligently plan lessons to match the different needs of the children in their class but some do this more effectively than others. In some classes the tasks teachers plan are not purposeful, and do not allow children to learn in enough depth. This means that, in these lessons, a few children become restless.

The school has improved its curriculum, taking account of Curriculum for Excellence guidance. For example, it has a suitable focus on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills to raise children's achievement in these areas. Productive links with local businesses are helping to develop children's skills for learning, life and work. In the nursery and primary classes, children receive a broad range of stimulating experiences. The Leonardo Effect is an initiative which is successfully helping children to see meaningful links in their learning between art and science. This approach provides a good model for staff to help children see similar links between other subjects. This will also help children to apply their skills across different areas of the curriculum. We have asked the school to improve some of its learning programmes sooner than planned, so that children make clearer progress in all areas, particularly in health and wellbeing. This will also help teachers to plan effective ways for children to build on the many skills they learn through their personal achievements and through daily school life.

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

All teachers are involved in school improvement. They reflect critically on their work and meet the headteacher to analyse assessments and discuss children's achievement in literacy and mathematics. Staff undertake professional learning to improve their practice and this brings clear benefits to children. For example, teachers meet other school staff, including secondary colleagues to discuss the way they assess children's progress and to ensure smooth transitions when children move on to Wester Hailes Education Centre. Children have a say in decisions which affect them, but more children, particularly younger children are capable of having a stronger influence. The headteacher has been in post for just over one year. During that time, she has gained the respect and trust of parents, children and staff. She has successfully encouraged a small but enthusiastic group of parents to form a Parent Council. She has implemented some ways to find out what the school does well and how it can improve. However, these approaches are not yet leading to clear enough improvements in learning and teaching. We have asked staff to introduce more rigorous ways to monitor the quality of learning and teaching so that children's experiences are of a consistently high quality across the school and nursery. We are confident that staff want the very best for your children and will continue to support the headteacher in bringing about these improvements.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Enthusiastic children who are keen to learn and are proud of their school.
- Children's high-quality art work which is valued and displayed attractively throughout the school.
- Staff who provide a nurturing atmosphere and have high expectations for children to do well.
- Very effective partnerships within and beyond the school which support and extend children's learning.

We discussed with staff and The City of Edinburgh Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Help children to use feedback from teachers to set themselves goals for improvement.
- Continue to develop the curriculum so that children make clear progress in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and health and wellbeing.
- Improve the way the school monitors and evaluates its work so that all children receive consistently high-quality learning and teaching in every class.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements and that the school will be able to implement further changes highlighted during this inspection. As a result, we will make no further visits. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, The City of Edinburgh Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Elaine Merrilees
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/SighthillPrimarySchoolEdinburghCity.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.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the publication *How good is our school?*¹. Quality indicators for the nursery class can be found in the publication *Child at the Centre*². Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Sighthill Primary School.

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

Nursery class.

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

A copy of the full letter is available on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/SighthillPrimarySchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

¹ *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence: part 3*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2007, http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/HowgoodisourschoolJtEpart3_tcm4-684258.pdf.

² *The Child at the Centre (2), Self-Evaluation in the early years*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2007, http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/Images/catcseey_tcm4-712692.pdf.

Please note that the term "adequate" in these documents has been replaced with "satisfactory".