

**REPORT TO:** Education Committee

**MEETING DATE:** 18 June 2014

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

**SUBJECT:** Inspection of North Berwick Nursery School by Education Scotland

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To report to Committee on the report by Education Scotland on the inspection of North Berwick Nursery School.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to: -
- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
  - (ii) Note that as a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the recommendations of the report.
  - (iii) Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the contents of the report.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 North Berwick Nursery School was inspected in December 2013 by Education Scotland and a report was published in February 2014.
- 3.2 The report noted that the particular strengths of the school were:
- Articulate, friendly children who enjoy coming to nursery.
  - The professional expertise of staff, and how well they respond to children's interests.
  - Strong and productive links with parents, local community groups and other agencies which help to support children's learning and development.

- The commitment of staff, including managers, to bringing about further improvement.
- Continue to raise attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Further develop approaches to planning and assessing children's learning using Curriculum for Excellence.

3.3 Education Scotland agreed the following areas for further improvement with the school and education authority:

- Continue to improve children's learning stories, helping children to understand themselves better as learners.
- Further improve the curriculum, so that children's learning is progressive and challenging.
- Develop more rigorous ways to evaluate the quality of education which the nursery provides.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other - None

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 The inspection of North Berwick Nursery School (Appendix 1)

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<b>DATE</b>	2 June 2014

4 February 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**North Berwick Nursery School  
East Lothian Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's pre-school centre. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and we worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the pre-school centre supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the pre-school centre's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the pre-school centre's recent work, including children's learning outdoors and the 'Talking Time' initiative. As a result, we were able to find out how good the pre-school centre is at improving children's education.

**How well do children learn and achieve?**

The nursery is a welcoming centre which encourages and builds children's confidence and self-esteem. It provides positive play experiences which help your children to develop and learn and to make good progress. When they arrive, children quickly and independently choose from a wide range of activities. Almost all chat animatedly with their friends during play. The high-quality outdoor area provides a rich stimulus for children to explore and learn, and to take part in energetic play. Here, children engage in tasks with increasing perseverance, particularly when they are working with a member of staff. Children's experiences are enriched and extended by taking part in walks around North Berwick, for example to post their Christmas cards or to observe seasonal changes. By helping at snack, and tidying up the playroom, children are learning how to become more independent. Many children are now capable of developing greater responsibility, particularly in relation to their own learning. We have asked staff to make better use of children's learning stories to help children reflect on their play and begin to plan their next steps. This will help children to understand how the activities they take part in contribute to their learning. We know you appreciate sharing these learning stories with your children and we are confident staff will continue to include you as they improve these further.

Children's skills in early literacy and numeracy are developing well. Almost all listen to staff and follow instructions carefully, for example when baking. The 'Talking Time' initiative is helping to provide support in early speech and language for some children. Almost all children enjoy sharing books with adults and many are able to take part in high-quality discussions about stories. Most older children can read and write their names and younger children make good attempts to do so. Some children are able to sound out and write simple words. Although children value having their writing displayed around the playrooms, they would benefit from more opportunities to write for real purposes. For example, making signs for the playroom and garden or producing their own books to share with others. Children have a good understanding of number and early mathematical concepts such as measure and shape. They have drawn graphs to display their findings about the backpacks they collected for children in Malawi. Nursery routines are helping to develop children's understanding of their own health and wellbeing. In other areas, such as science and the expressive arts, children enjoy their experiences but their progress is not so clear.

### **How well does the pre-school centre support children to develop and learn?**

We agree with your view that staff are friendly, approachable and highly skilled. Through professional development and training, they have a very good understanding of how young children learn and develop. You shared with us how much you appreciate the way they work together with you to support your children's learning. The nursery also works successfully with a range of other groups to provide strong support for children and families who need additional help. For example, a programme called 'Raising Children with Confidence' is helping to build resilience in children. Most staff make good use of questioning to challenge children's thinking. They provide activities which meet the needs of most children but need to be sure that tasks provide the right level of challenge. Staff respond very well to children's emerging interests. We have asked them to now develop the way in which they observe, record and track children's progress so that they can monitor children's learning more closely. This will help children to achieve even more. The broad curriculum is based on play and active learning. It has a suitable focus on developing children's early skills in literacy and numeracy so that they make progress in these areas. Staff understand the need to develop other areas of learning in a similar way, so that children's skills develop progressively across the whole curriculum. The nursery prepares children well for the transition to school. It provides strong support for children's social and emotional needs and shares helpful information about children's learning with class teachers.

### **How well does the pre-school centre improve the quality of its work?**

The nursery has a good range of informal ways to evaluate its work. It should now develop more systematic ways to gather information about the quality of its work. All staff are very committed to providing the best possible outcomes for children and their families. They are reflective and meet regularly, often with managers, to discuss their work and how they might bring about improvements. Staff often visit other nurseries to seek out good practice and are proud to also share what they do at North Berwick with colleagues from other establishments. The headteacher and depute headteacher at Law Primary School have only recently taken over

responsibility for leading the nursery school. In this short time, the headteacher has made well-judged decisions to benefit staff and children. The depute headteacher works regularly in the playrooms and already knows the staff and children. The management team understands what the nursery does well and has a clear commitment to making further improvements. Staff welcome and value the views of parents. They also listen respectfully to children, but need to help them to make more decisions about their learning and give them more say about the activities in the playrooms. We are confident that with your continued support, North Berwick Nursery School will continue to provide high-quality care and learning for your children.

Our inspection of your pre-school centre found the following key strengths.

- Articulate, friendly children who enjoy coming to nursery.
- The professional expertise of staff, and how well they respond to children's interests.
- Strong and productive links with parents, local community groups and other agencies which help to support children's learning and development.
- The commitment of staff, including managers, to bringing about further improvement.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the pre-school centre. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to improve children's learning stories, helping children to understand themselves better as learners.
- Further improve the curriculum, so that children's learning is progressive and challenging.
- Develop more rigorous ways to evaluate the quality of education which the nursery provides.

### **What happens at the end of the inspection?**

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the pre-school centre'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 the arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of the pre-school centre, the local authority will inform parents about the pre-school centre's progress.

Elaine Merrilees  
HM Inspector

Donna Conroy  
Care Inspectorate Officer

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/eyc/NorthBerwickNurserySchoolNorthBerwickEastLothian.asp>

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