

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 18 June 2014

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services)

SUBJECT: Inspection of Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class
by Education Scotland

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report to Committee on the report by Education Scotland on the inspection of Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to: -
- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
 - (ii) Note the particular strengths of the school, and the strong start made by the new Head Teacher.
 - (iii) Note that Education Scotland will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of their report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class was inspected in February 2014 by Education Scotland and a report was published in April 2014.
- 3.2 The report noted that the particular strengths of the school were:
- The polite and well-behaved children who enjoy learning at school.
 - The readiness of staff to improve the school under the leadership of the recently-appointed headteacher.
 - The positive start made by the new Head Teacher in identifying what the school needs to do to improve.

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

- Improve the school's curriculum and raise expectations of what all children can achieve.
- Increase the rigour of the school's approaches to self-evaluation, including approaches to assessment and tracking of progress, to bring about improvements and ensure the needs of all pupils are met.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the nursery and primary stages.

3.4 The school has already taken positive steps to address the main points for action outlined in the report, these include:

- An Action Plan has been prepared to address the report's findings this has led to:
 - An enhanced leadership team within the school to take forward aspects of the action plan.
 - Work to develop a shared vision, values and aims to inform developments, including curriculum developments.
 - Programmes being developed to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences which will better meet the needs of all learners.
 - Approaches to self-evaluation being improved, including the involvement of staff, parents and children in this process so as to raise expectations and improve attainment.
- The school is working with Education Scotland and its Quality Improvement Officer to:
 - Improve knowledge and understanding of self evaluation as a key mechanism to drive school improvement.
 - Support and monitor progress with the school action plan.

3.5 The Quality Improvement Officer is meeting with the Head Teacher on a weekly basis to review the ongoing work in the school and provide advice and support as necessary.

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 – Appointment of a temporary Depute Head Teacher for session 2014/15.
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 The inspection of Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class (Appendix1).

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DATE	28 May 2014

22 April 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Classes East Lothian 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 enterprising approaches to learning, approaches to reading and evaluating the numeracy and mathematics curriculum. 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?

At the primary stages and in the nursery classes, most children have a positive learning experience. Children in the nursery classes settle quickly into their routines and are showing respect for one another when learning to cooperate. We have asked staff to develop greater free access to the large outdoor area for all the nursery classes and to establish consistently high-quality experiences for children across the three playrooms. Children in P1 are motivated as learners and enjoy being actively involved through play. Almost all children are eager to learn and report that they enjoy learning at school. They feel staff encourage them to do well. In a few lessons, children worked well together when given the opportunity to work cooperatively in groups. Staff are planning to provide children with more regular opportunities to develop problem solving and investigative skills in cooperative groups. Too many lessons involve whole classes listening to and following instructions given by teachers. As a result, children are not actively enough involved in their learning. Many teachers shared what they wanted children to learn but did not give children enough feedback on how well they had achieved. We have asked the school to improve its approaches to assessing how well children learn and to helping them improve. The school has made a positive start to providing children with enterprising experiences. For example, children in P6 successfully hosted a recent Burns Supper that they ran for their invited guests and parents. Children in P2 were learning about planting and growing through the garden centre created in their classroom. Overall, staff relationships with children, including those in the behaviour support unit, are positive. The school now needs to ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences for all children. Children are involved in a variety of local clubs and take great pride representing their school at a range of events linked with local schools. At all stages, children are able to

demonstrate their awareness of environmental issues through their responsibilities for recycling. The school has successfully gained its first Eco-Schools Scotland green flag. Children are developing a good awareness as citizens and promote the involvement of the whole school community through their fundraising efforts for Children in Need and the Rag Bag collection. Overall, children are not making sufficient progress in developing literacy skills. In the nursery classes, children could be making better progress in all aspects of literacy and numeracy. Their achievements are not of a consistently high enough standard across the three playrooms. Currently, children are not building enough on what they have already learned and, as a result, the rate of progress in their learning is too slow. In almost all lessons, children listened attentively and responded well to teachers' questions. The school has taken some steps to improve children's attainment in reading but should also ensure children experience more opportunities to read in groups which will allow them to share what they have read. The quality of children's writing across the nursery and primary stages is not high enough. We have asked the staff to moderate the progress children are making in writing in order to raise expectations and develop a common understanding of what children can achieve. Across the school, children's attainment in numeracy and mathematics should be improved. The headteacher and staff have recognised this and plan to focus on this aspect of the school's work and bring about improvement. Children do not have sound enough knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts such as length, weight, volume and time. Children can demonstrate a good understanding of food hygiene, health and keeping safe. Within the behaviour support unit, children are not all making sufficient progress. We have asked senior managers to monitor the progress of these children more closely.

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

In the nursery, children experience a range of interesting activities. Staff now need to ensure a greater consistency in the level of challenge for all children and to ensure the needs of all children are reviewed regularly. Those children who attend the behaviour support unit are included in the mainstream classes where appropriate. This should be encouraged and well supported by staff as it can bring mutual benefit to all children at Cockenzie Primary School. There are important weaknesses in the school's arrangements for meeting the children's learning needs across the school, the behaviour support unit and nursery classes. In her short time in post, the headteacher has taken some initial steps to improve these arrangements and has accurately identified that much further work is required. In most lessons observed, the tasks and activities were not well matched to children's learning needs and did not challenge them sufficiently well. Currently, the school is developing systems and processes to identify, monitor and review children's needs to ensure they all achieve as highly as possible. The headteacher and staff value partnership with parents. This is being strengthened through a range of opportunities to welcome parents and carers into the school and improving communication with parents and carers through the recently-formed Parent Council.

Staff are at an early stage of developing a common understanding of Curriculum for Excellence. They do not have a shared understanding of what they are trying to achieve for children through the curriculum. The school needs to ensure that all children are able to make suitable progress in all curriculum areas and get the support to which they are entitled. The school works with a range of partners to ensure

children's learning in health and wellbeing is supported by experts and health professionals. Staff have introduced a variety of new materials for developing children's reading skills. They now need to ensure that children make suitable progress in reading. The headteacher has accurately identified this as an improvement priority in the school's development plan. Staff in the nursery need to create opportunities to share learning with staff in the P1 classes and improve progression across the early level. Children in P7 benefit from pastoral support provided at the time they move on to S1. The school plans to strengthen links with Preston Lodge High School to ensure children's learning is assessed and tracked effectively so they can build on what they have already learned.

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

The recently-appointed headteacher and staff have identified the need to improve aspects of the school's work, including children's learning experiences and achievements, and approaches to assessment. Much work remains to be done to ensure these improvements are made. The headteacher, along with her senior management team needs to strengthen the school's approaches to observing learning and teaching, and to assessing and tracking children's progress. This will allow them to support and evaluate progress towards the agreed priorities for improvement. The headteacher has identified the need to involve all staff, including those in the behaviour support unit, more in improving the work of the school. Teachers have begun to reflect more on their practice and should continue to develop their professional knowledge of, and use of, effective teaching methods. A few teachers have undertaken leadership development courses. The school would benefit greatly from more staff taking on responsibility for leading improvement. The headteacher plans to provide more opportunities for teachers to work together to ensure improvement in the quality of learning and teaching and the development of good practice. The headteacher and her staff should work with partners, including parents, to create a shared vision for what the school aims to achieve. With the support from the recently-formed Parent Council and yourselves as parents and carers, Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Classes have the capacity to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The polite and well-behaved children who enjoy learning at school.
- The readiness of staff to improve the school under the leadership of the recently-appointed headteacher.
- The positive start made by the headteacher in identifying what the school needs to do to improve.

We discussed with staff and East Lothian Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery classes. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve the school's curriculum and raise expectations of what all children can achieve.
- Increase the rigour of the school's approaches to self-evaluation, including approaches to assessment and tracking of progress, to bring about improvements and ensure the needs of all pupils are met.

- Improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the nursery and primary stages.

The Care Inspectorate have shared their findings from a recent inspection of the nursery classes and will publish a report under separate cover.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings, we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within twelve months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Susan Gow
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/CockenziePrimarySchoolEastLothian.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.