

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 8 March 2016

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

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

1 PURPOSE

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

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to: -

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Thank the Head Teacher and staff on the very good progress that has been made by the school since the return visit by HMIE in October 2015.
- (iii) Education Scotland noted that the Head Teacher's appointment of a new Depute Head Teacher and two Principal Teacher posts, along with an entirely new team in the nursery, means that it is too early to measure the full impact of these positive staff changes. The school needs more time to further raise attainment and implement the improvement priorities. Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer will work with East Lothian Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Education Scotland will return to make an extended visit with the Local Authority before the end of this school session, and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In April 2014, and then again in March 2015 HM Inspectors published a letter on Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class. Inspectors visited the school again in October 2015.
- 3.2 The report noted the following areas of improvement:

- Greatly improved teaching approaches which encourage high expectations of children's achievements.
- Improved pace of learning with appropriate challenge that has led to better progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Improved focus on tracking attainment and systems to identify and support children with additional needs.
- Raised expectations in all aspects of the school's work.
- The commitment of staff and the collaborative leadership of the Head Teacher means a clearer shared vision across the school.

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

- Further develop the curriculum and monitor and assess children's attainment.
- Continue developing opportunities for all children to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Continue work in developing the rationale for the curriculum, and in particular at early level for nursery and P1.

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 Education Scotland report on Cockenzie Primary Report dated 15 December 2015 (Appendix 1).

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DATE	9th February 2016

15 December 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Cockenzie Primary School and Nursery Class East Lothian Council

In April 2014, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. We published another letter in March 2015. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well children are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

At the primary stages and in the nursery classes, almost all children have a positive learning experience. Children in the nursery class play together confidently and are enjoying learning about fire engines and fire fighters. They are developing skills of independence and make choices about what they want to learn through a wide range of high quality play materials on offer. Almost all children are purposefully engaged with a wide choice of stimulating play activities both indoors and outdoors. We are pleased that the recently established nursery staff team are encouraging children to investigate and solve problems through imaginative activities such as exploring electronics at the 'tinkering table'. At the primary stages, almost all children are engaged well in their learning and tell us they enjoy learning at school. They are developing skills for learning through becoming increasingly reflective about the ways in which they learn. They are becoming increasingly aware of how well they are achieving and are expected to think more about how they can continue to improve. This is particularly effective in numeracy and literacy lessons where expectations are high, the pace of learning is brisk and children are benefiting from working cooperatively in groups. Children also benefit from working together in small groups when investigating and sharing ideas and researching relevant topics such as Cockenzie's Industrial Past. Teaching approaches have greatly improved and children are clear about what they are learning and when they have been successful. Very effective use is made of digital technologies to enhance teaching and to support learning through interactive white boards and netbooks. We have asked staff to continue to develop the use of learning logs to identify next steps for learners and to share children's progress with parents. Overall, children are motivated and actively

involved in their learning. They take great pride in sharing their learning with parents and visitors.

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, the school can demonstrate children are now making good progress in their learning. The pace of learning and level of challenge have improved which has led to better progress in literacy and numeracy. The school is using a range of assessment information to measure progress of individual children and groups and should continue to develop the use of this information to ensure all children are progressing to the best of their abilities consistently over time. However, the rigour of tracking children's progress is greatly improved and the standards expected have increased. We are pleased with the improved progression in children's writing skills and mental agility in numeracy and problem solving. By P7 children can write sophisticated reports about science experiments. We have asked the school to continue developing opportunities for all children to apply their literacy skills and numeracy skills well in other areas of the curriculum. Children are benefiting from opportunities to read together regularly in groups. All children benefit from the school library and are encouraged to read for pleasure. The school has introduced opportunities for children to develop leadership skills through their involvement in responsibility groups linked to the school improvement priorities.

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

Staff now place a clear emphasis on setting higher expectations for children's learning. They have improved their approaches to planning learning and are developing a shared understanding of what they want children to achieve through Curriculum for Excellence. They have successfully reviewed the approaches to literacy and introduced new maths programmes to develop pace and challenge. Greater relevance to learning is being developed through improved grouping of the experiences and outcomes across the curriculum. We are pleased to see that helpful curriculum overviews have been shared with parents at meet the teacher events. Staff are now more confident about the skills they want children to develop and the ways in which these can be built upon. We have asked the school to continue with its work in developing its rationale for the curriculum and in particular, further develop the curriculum and learning at the early level for nursery and P1 children to ensure all children make the best possible progress. The school is strengthening its approaches to meeting the needs of all learners. Staff work very well together to support children who require additional help in their learning. Systematic approaches to reviewing needs has resulted in a newly created nurture room to build children's self-esteem and resilience. Children identified as requiring support are ably supported through the skilled support staff team. The improved focus on tracking attainment and systems to identify and support children with additional needs informs learning groups and targets support appropriately for those who need it.

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

The school has raised expectations in all aspects of its work. The headteacher has had a very positive impact on the work of the school. She has appointed a new deputy headteacher who has quickly gained the confidence and respect of staff and

parents. Staff appreciate the guidance and support of the headteacher. The senior leadership team has successfully supported and challenged staff to bring about improved learning experiences for your children. The continuous focus on areas identified for improvement from the original inspection has resulted in your children making better progress and benefiting from the vibrant learning environment that has been developed by all. The commitment of staff and the collaborative leadership of the headteacher has resulted in the school now having a clearer and shared vision founded on high expectations for children. The headteacher has managed the pace of change well and has a clear focus on Curriculum for Excellence to ensure your children continue to flourish. Staff are committed to their professional development and are fully involved in leading many aspects of the school's developments. Support from the Parent Council, together with the wider parent forum and community is highly valued by the headteacher and staff. The open-door approach taken by the headteacher and staff has contributed to improved communication and links made with the school. The school now needs time to build on the good progress it has made, to further develop the curriculum and monitor and assess children's attainment.

What happens next?

We are confident that the capacity of the school to continue to improve has significantly increased. The headteacher's appointment of a new deputy headteacher and imminent filling of two principal teacher posts together with the entirely new team in the nursery means that at the time of this return inspection visit it is too early to measure the full impact of these positive staff changes. The school needs more time to further raise attainment and implement its improvement priorities.

As a result, 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 make an extended visit with the local authority before the end of the school session in 2016 and report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

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.