

Item: 7

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 9 September 2020.

Education Scotland:

Inspection of Eday Community School and Nursery Class.

Report by Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To advise on progress in respect of improvement areas identified in Education Scotland (HMIE) inspection.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 5 February 2020, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee scrutinised Education Scotland's evaluation of Eday Primary School and Nursery Class and recommended that an update on progress made in respect of the improvement areas identified be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

It is recommended:

2.2.

That the Committee scrutinise progress made in respect of the improvement areas identified by Education Scotland in relation to the inspection of Eday Primary School and Nursery Class, as detailed in sections 4 to 6 of this report, in order to obtain assurance that action has been taken or agreed as necessary.

3. Background

3.1.

At its meeting on 5 February 2020, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee scrutinised Education Scotland's evaluation of Eday Primary School and Nursery Class and recommended that an update on progress made in respect of the improvement areas identified be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

3.2.

The inspection report outlined the key strengths on which improvement could be built as follows:

- The new headteacher's appropriate focus on improvement and involvement of parents and partners in the development of the school.
- Positive relationships fostered between the head teacher, staff, parents and children. Children were well supported in moving from nursery into Primary 1 and onward to other schools.
- Polite children who were developing skills of independence and positive attitudes to their learning.

3.3.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, along with Orkney's other schools and establishments, the school closed on 20 March 2020. Pupils have continued to be supported by the head teacher in their learning at home. Where appropriate, additional support for learners has been provided, in line with local and national guidance. The school reopened on 12 August 2020 and the head teacher welcomed back pupils. As the new school year gets underway, the Service Improvement Officer linked to the school will work with the Head Teacher to review and refine the improvement programme. While school inspections will not be recommencing until 2021, following discussion with HMIE, the Managing Inspector from the inspection team will be allocated to work closely with the Head Teacher and the Quality Improvement Officer to support overall quality and improvement.

3.4.

The following sections summarise the work undertaken over the five months following the inspection.

4. Progress on Recommendations

4.1.

In the period immediately following the inspection, the Head Teacher actively led key activities to address the main recommendations set out in the inspection report. Some of this activity was disrupted due to weather and transport challenges, which meant that the pace of change and improvement up to the school closing in March had been hampered.

4.2.

Securing the service and support of an experienced Head Teacher as the part-time relief teacher for the school provided a unique opportunity for learning and development. This staffing solution was time limited and so it was important to ensure the school could achieve maximum gain while it is available. The new Head Teacher had begun to establish a useful network of support from the other Head Teachers in Orkney. This collaboration continues to have the capacity to offer long term support across all aspects of school management.

5. Key Aspects of Progress to Date

The following highlights key aspects of progress to date in relation to the main points for action.

5.1. Raise Attainment and Improve Children's Progress in Learning

5.1.1.

An overarching curriculum programme, outlining broad and coherent opportunities for learning, has been established and provides a structure for specific learning in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

5.1.2.

Curriculum progression pathways have now been refreshed for all core subjects to provide clear structure to guide learning pathways. This has also included support and training delivered by an external training provider.

5.1.3.

Planning now incorporates Learning Intentions and Success Criteria, enabling pupils to know the focus of learning and what they need to achieve it. Progression pathways are beginning to be used by the Head Teacher to track and measure the progress and achievement of each pupil in line with Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks.

5.1.4.

The Education Scotland Attainment Adviser for Orkney and the central education team have begun to work with the Head Teacher on monitoring and tracking of attainment data. Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA), which provide diagnostic feedback, have been completed and the data is beginning to be analysed to support and refine learning plans.

5.1.5.

Additional literacy assessments has been undertaken to confirm teacher judgement in relation to progress and achievement. Pupil target setting is beginning to be introduced but is still at an early stage of development.

5.2. Ensure Effective Professional Learning and Development Results in Improved Quality of Learning and Teaching

5.2.1.

Support for the new Head Teacher in management time and teaching time has been provided by an experienced Head Teacher, an external literacy and numeracy consultant and staff from the education service's central team.

5.2.2.

Where possible, the new Head Teacher has taken advantage of online learning to support his professional learning. In the context of the remote island setting, these offer opportunities that are reliable, tailored to need and quality assured.

5.2.3.

The Head Teacher has had further opportunities for professional development provided by the service, for example Self-evaluation in the Early Years and Child Protection and Safeguarding. This has ensured that, as a manager of the Nursery, the Head Teacher has started to engage with the Early Years team on further developing robust and effective self-evaluation processes in the Early Years' setting to ensure improved outcomes for the children. The Head Teacher is also fully aware of his statutory responsibilities in terms of Child Protection and safeguarding and has ensured that this is reflected in any relevant procedures and processes in school.

5.2.4.

Some aspects of support have been postponed due to disruption to the transport network. For example, a planned visit by a head teacher colleague and the local authority's attainment adviser were postponed. These have been rescheduled, but any delay impacts on the pace of change.

5.3. Develop Rigorous Self-evaluation Based on Robust Evidence Leading to Improved Outcomes for Children

There are now planned, regular opportunities to discuss and shape the work and life of the school with pupils through reintroduction of weekly Pupil Council and Head Teacher meetings. The Head Teacher, with support from the Service Improvement team, Head of Education and other Head Teacher colleagues, is now developing a self-evaluation framework. This includes incorporating clear systems and processes in the school, making use of self-evaluation toolkits such as How Good Is Our School and How Good is our School (4) to engage with staff, pupils and parents to evaluate how well the school is doing and areas for improvement. A calendar of yearly staff and Parent Council meetings has now been planned for this year to begin this process.

5.4. Continue to Improve the Learning Environment and Curriculum

5.4.1.

Alongside the Head Teacher, pupils have started to evaluate their learning spaces and identify ways in which the environment could be changed to better support their learning. Through support from an external adviser, learning bays are being enhanced to facilitate greater independence and intentionality of learning.

5.4.2.

The children have started to be asked to evaluate the learning spaces and help identify ways in which the environment could be changed to better support their learning

6. Summary and Next Steps

6.1.

The initial inspection team concluded that the school needed additional support and more time to make necessary improvements.

6.2.

The pace of change and improvement has been compromised, and the support arrangements disrupted, by difficulties linked to accessing the island.

6.3.

Additional support will continue to be provided by staff within the Education, Leisure and Housing service team. This will now be augmented with the help and support of HMIE based within Education Scotland.

7. Corporate Governance

This report relates to governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

8. Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising directly from the recommendations to this report.

9. Legal Aspects

The Council should comply with all legal recommendations made and subject to that, there are no legal implications arising from this noting report.

10. Contact Officers

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