

Item: 6

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 6 September 2023.

Education Scotland – Follow up Inspection.

Eday Community School and Nursery Class.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To advise of progress in Eday Primary School and Nursery Class following on from an original inspection undertaken in September 2019.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, in May 2023, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland undertook a follow up visit to Eday Primary School and Nursery.

2.2.

The positive feedback on progress made by the school since the original inspection in September 2019, as detailed in the letter from Education Scotland attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.3.

That, as a result of the inspection visit on 16 and 17 May 2023, HM Inspectors are confident in the school's capacity to continue to improve and as such will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection in September 2019.

The Committee is invited to scrutinise:

2.4.

The inspection letter in respect of Eday Primary School and Nursery Class, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, issued by Education Scotland on 27 June 2023, together with next steps outlined in section 5 of this report, in order to obtain assurance.

3. Background

3.1.

Eday Primary School and Nursery Class was inspected by Education Scotland in September 2019. Ongoing, regular engagement between local authority officers and HM Inspectors has taken place since the original inspection. A number of virtual engagement meetings took place between HM Inspectors and education authority staff, school staff and parents on 17 and 18 November 2021. A visit to Eday School by HM Inspectors took place on 29 March 2022 and a letter was published in May 2022.

3.2.

As a result of the ongoing challenges for staffing Eday School, a decision was taken to increase the teaching staff complement in Eday School. A second full-time teacher was recruited and started in post in November 2022. The acting head teacher and the newly appointed class teacher, provide the expected non-class contact time for teachers and head teachers and provide the children with the full curriculum entitlement, including expressive arts provision.

4. Key areas of progress identified in the report

4.1.

The recent inspection visit in May 2023 evaluated the original four areas for improvement identified in the original inspection of 2019.

- Raise attainment and improve children's progress in learning.
- Ensure effective professional learning and development results in improved quality of learning and teaching.
- Develop rigorous self-evaluation based on robust evidence leading to improved outcomes for children.
- Continue to improve the learning environment and curriculum.

4.2.

Significant progress has been made against all areas for improvement as detailed in Appendix 1. The acting head teacher and staff team have worked hard to significantly improve the work of the school, and this is evident through the report.

5. Summary and Next Steps

5.1.

The following summarises the areas identified for further improvement:

- Prioritise the development of children's writing skills as attainment in writing remains lower than expected.

- Extend the monitoring of children's progress to include other areas of the curriculum.
- Strengthen further the skills needed to progress key areas for improvement, such as writing and play.
- Improve the overall quality of learning and teaching through the implementation of the local authority's priority of high-quality learning and teaching.
- Continue to strengthen approaches to quality assurance.
- Develop further curriculum planning to ensure appropriate progression for all children across all curriculum areas.

5.2.

These areas will be taken forward by the school as part of the school improvement planning process and will feature on the plan for Eday over the next few years to ensure that these improvements are embedded in practice.

5.3.

Local Authority officers will continue to engage with the staff team to monitor and support the improvements identified.

6. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and scrutiny 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.

7. Financial Implications

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

8. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

9. Contact Officers

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10. Appendix

Appendix 1 – Letter from Education Scotland.

27 June 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2019, HM Inspectors published a letter on Eday Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and Orkney Islands Council. We subsequently returned to the school to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in May 2022. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the acting headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

Raise attainment and improve children's progress in learning.

Overall, children's progress and attainment in learning has improved since the original inspection. Increased stability in staffing is enabling staff to meet the needs of individual children more appropriately. Staff are monitoring children's progress in literacy more closely and use the information gained to inform the pace of learning appropriately. They use assessment information more effectively to monitor children's progress. Children continue to make very good progress in the nursery class.

Staff have rightly identified the need to prioritise the development of children's writing skills as attainment in writing remains lower than expected. They recognise the need to extend the monitoring of children's progress to include other areas of the curriculum. As planned, staff should continue to develop a shared understanding of national expected levels of achievement by working in partnership with staff from other schools.

Ensure effective professional learning and development results in improved quality of learning and teaching.

The introduction of a second full-time teacher has significantly increased opportunities for professional dialogue about learning and teaching. Staff engage regularly with colleagues in other schools and local authority officers to inform their practice. They undertake a range of professional learning activities, including certificated courses designed to enhance the strategic leadership of the school.

Moving forward, staff should strengthen further the skills needed to progress key areas for improvement, such as writing and play. The planned implementation of the local authority's priority of high-quality learning and teaching will support staff to improve the overall quality of learning and teaching.

Develop rigorous self-evaluation based on robust evidence leading to improved outcomes for children.

The acting headteacher has improved significantly approaches to communication. As a result, staff, children and parents feel more involved in the work of the school. They believe their views are sought and acted upon. Children in the primary have begun to engage in structured activities to evaluate various aspects of their school experience. The nursery class continues to make highly effective use of a floorbook to support self-evaluation activities. Nursery practitioners monitor and record the impact of changes made very effectively. There is potential to extend this approach into the primary.

The acting headteacher has begun to undertake more formal quality assurance activities to inform improvement. Staff are beginning to use increasingly reliable data about children's progress and attainment to inform school improvement. The acting headteacher should continue to strengthen approaches to quality assurance, considering how the impact of key improvement priorities will be measured.

Continue to improve the learning environment and curriculum.

There is a marked change in the ethos and culture across the school. The acting headteacher's sustained focus on improving wellbeing and relationships has improved the sense of community across the school. Children have an increased sense of belonging following the introduction of a school uniform. This positive change is contributing to improved outcomes for children.

Staff have made significant improvements to both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The classroom and gym hall have been reorganised to increase the space available for a range of learning activities. Children now make regular use of the community room, enhancing opportunities for individual and group work. The school library has been improved to support the developing reading culture. In the nursery, children now have access to quiet spaces in which to relax. The introduction of large play equipment in the school grounds has transformed children's access to play facilities on the island.

Children are experiencing a broader range of curriculum experiences. Their opportunities to take on leadership roles is increasing. Staff are extending children's learning experiences beyond the island of Eday. They have begun to develop the curriculum and improve approaches to planning learning. They recognise the need to develop further curriculum planning to ensure appropriate progression for all children across all curriculum areas.

What happens next?

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Orkney Islands Council will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Pamela Adamson
HM Inspector