

Item: 8

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 8 June 2022.

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 inspection undertaken in September 2019.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published an inspection report for Eday Primary and Nursery Class on 10 December 2019.

2.2.

That, due to ongoing issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, HM Inspectors were not able to carry out a traditional follow through inspection visit.

2.3.

That any school due a follow through visit has been visited and the following areas considered:

- Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19.
- Progress with recommendations from previous inspection.

2.4.

That inspectors carried out a follow-through inspection visit to Eday Primary and Nursery Class in March 2022 and subsequently wrote to parents and carers on 24 May 2022, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, in order to share their positive feedback on the learning experiences for the children.

2.5.

That, as a result of the follow-through inspection, referred to at paragraph 2.4 above, Education Scotland has asked the Council to provide a report, within 12 months, outlining how well the improvements to the school has been sustained.

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 HMle has taken place since the original inspection. A number of virtual engagement meetings took place between HMle and education authority staff, school staff and parents on 17 and 18 November 2021. A further actual visit to Eday School by HMle took place on 29 March 2022.

3.2.

There remains ongoing challenges for staffing Eday School. The lack of planes for Wednesdays impact on the children's learning experiences as the pupils miss out on specialist provision in art, music or PE if the planes do not go. It has not been possible for the Education Service to provide the acting Head Teacher with the management and leadership release time that she is entitled to. This is due to lack of staff wanting to go to Eday to teach due to the long days for travelling if by ferry and the fact that there is only one flight per week which is when the school gets expressive arts staff. A number of options have been explored but this is proving to be significantly challenging and impacts on the ability for senior staff to carry out their full range of duties and remits as well as on their long-term health and wellbeing.

3.3.

Due to the ongoing issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, HM Inspectors have not carried out traditional follow through inspection visits. Instead, any school due a follow-through visit has been visited and the following areas detailed below are those considered by HMle in the letter attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

- Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19.
- Progress with recommendations from previous inspection.

4. Key areas of progress identified in the report

4.1.

The following key areas of progress have been identified:

- Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19
 - The acting head teacher takes a nurturing approach to supporting the individual needs of children and has fostered positive relationships with families. The acting head teacher provides much needed continuity for the school.
 - The education authority supports the school well through enhanced provision in staffing and investment in travel.
- Progress with recommendations from previous inspection:

- Staff in the school and its nursery provide a warm and welcoming environment for children. Children demonstrate improved respect for one another. They are also understanding and managing their own behaviour and reactions more effectively.
- All parents report that children are now more interested in learning, want to go to school and return home again content to complete their homework tasks. They attribute these positive signs to the efforts of the acting headteacher.

4.2.

The nursery was highlighted as an area of strength of the school. Practitioners reflect on children's experiences and adapt and adopt new ways to engage children effectively in their play. The nursery has continued to improve learning experiences for children through its environment where children make very good progress.

4.3.

The acting head teacher recognises the need for a sustained focus on children's wellbeing and is improving the range of resources to do this effectively. Improvements to the learning environment, the structure of the school day and a broad curriculum programme are at an early stage of development but show promising signs of impacting on improved experiences for learners.

5. Summary and Next Steps

5.1.

The initial inspection team concluded that the school needed additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Additional support continues to be provided and this will remain in place during the continued engagement with Education Scotland.

5.2.

Further areas for consideration include identifying ways in which children can take more responsibility for their own learning and increase opportunities for them to learn outdoors.

5.3.

Developing further reflective practices and ensure observations of children's learning are noted to help inform planning next steps in learning and allow for flexibility in the approaches taken to deliver high quality experiences on a day-by-day basis.

5.4.

There are more effective approaches in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the nursery and these should be extended across the school, with a particular focus on developing high quality learning, teaching and assessment.

5.5.

Consideration should now be given to developing the school's vision, values and aims to reflect the school's unique context.

5.6.

The acting head teacher should continue to build on the effective work done in the nursery to develop a whole-school vision in partnership with the community.

5.7.

The Parent Council should resume its activities and harness its support in taking the school and its community forward with the new acting head teacher and her team.

5.8.

It was recognised that, due to the impact of the pandemic, the school required more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection visit. HMIE will undertake a further visit to Eday School within 12 months of this report.

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 significant financial implications arising directly from the recommendations to this report.

8. 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.

9. Contact Officers

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10. Appendix

Appendix 1 – Letter from Education Scotland.

24 May 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education are currently carrying out visits to some schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. When we wrote to you after the last inspection of Eday Community School, we said that we would engage with the school to report on progress. We recently held discussions with parents, staff and the local authority during a visit to the school. Our engagement helped us learn more about how you and your families have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also heard about approaches to support your children's health and wellbeing, learning and progress. We discussed the progress the school and its nursery has made since the original inspection with the service manager for primary education and the headteacher.

Supporting children, young people and families through COVID-19

Since the original inspection, Eday Community School has experienced significant changes to staffing. During the pandemic, the headteacher of Sanday Junior Secondary fulfilled a dual role successfully acting as headteacher for Eday Community School. During this period the children and families of Eday were supported well. The acting principal teacher was appointed in February 2021 and liaised closely with the acting headteacher to ensure continuity for children in their learning, and improvement to the ethos of the school. The acting principal teacher has recently been appointed on a temporary basis to the acting headteacher post. She takes a nurturing approach to supporting the individual needs of children and has fostered positive relationships with families. The acting headteacher provides much needed continuity for the school. The education authority supports the school well through enhanced provision in staffing and investment in travel. It is important now to sustain stability in staffing to allow the school to make a successful recovery and children to achieve their full potential.

Progress with recommendations from previous inspection

Staff in the school and its nursery provide a warm and welcoming environment for children. The introduction of a well-attended breakfast club, supported by the community, helps children to be ready for learning. Children demonstrate improved respect for one another. They have impeccable table manners when having lunch together and take responsibility for ensuring everyone feels included. They are also understanding and managing their own behaviour and reactions more effectively.

Children have access to digital technologies to support their learning, and new resources to support the development of their social skills. The curriculum is broadened through the weekly visits to Sanday where children have swimming lessons and mix with other classes for dancing, for example. The curriculum for music has included guitar playing provided by the Youth Music Initiative. This culminated in children performing together and was valued highly by parents. Children are developing skills in sewing and use their own time after school to make items of their choice. All parents report that children are now more interested

in learning, want to go to school and return home again content to complete their homework tasks. They attribute these positive signs to the efforts of the acting headteacher.

The nursery provision is supported well by the local authority and continues to be a strength of the school. Practitioners reflect on children's experiences and adapt and adopt new ways to engage children effectively in their play. The nursery has continued to improve learning experiences for children through its environment where children make very good progress. The school should continue to focus on improving children's attainment and achievement to ensure all reach their full potential.

The acting headteacher continues to develop her skills and experience as a class teacher. She recognises the need for a sustained focus on children's wellbeing and is improving the range of resources to do this effectively. Improvements to the learning environment, the structure of the school day and a broad curriculum programme are at an early stage of development but show promising signs of impacting on improved experiences for learners. Consideration should be given to ways in which children can take more responsibility for their own learning and increase opportunities for them to learn outdoors. The acting headteacher is developing reflective practices and should ensure her observations of children's learning are noted. This will help inform planning next steps in learning and allow for flexibility in the approaches taken to deliver high quality experiences on a day-by-day basis.

There are more effective approaches in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the nursery. These approaches now need to be extended across the school, with a particular focus on developing high quality learning, teaching and assessment. Consideration should now be given to developing the school's vision, values and aims to reflect the school's unique context. The acting headteacher should continue to build on the effective work done in the nursery to develop a whole-school vision in partnership with the community. The Parent Council should resume its activities and harness its support in taking the school and its community forward with the new acting headteacher and her team.

What happens next?

Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are prioritising their plans to support recovery. As a result, the school needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will carry out another visit to the school within twelve months of the publication of this letter. When we carry out another visit, we will write to you informing you of the progress the school has made.

Susan Gow
Managing Inspector