



From mountain to sea

1st March 2023

REPORT TO EDUCATION SCOTLAND

DRUMBLADE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HUNTLY, ABERDEENSHIRE

Background

Drumblade Primary School is a non-denominational school with a role of 51 pupils and 17 children in Nursery. The school serves the rural catchment area of Drumblade and surrounding villages. Many of the children travel to and from school by minibus or car. The nursery has children that may go to Drumblade, Forgue or Largue Schools. The pupils are currently attending 30 hours per week, up to 6 hours a day as we offer 1140 term time only due to demand and location.

On leaving Drumblade Primary School the pupils transfer to The Gordon Schools, Huntly. Drumblade School is part of the Huntly Community Schools' Network and works closely with the other 8 schools in the Network. Community links are a valued part of school life. The school has a very supportive Parent Council and associated subgroups. These groups support school improvement activities and raise additional funds to provide many extras for the pupils in the school. Devolved budgets are managed in accordance with authority guidelines to support planned improvements in the school. The Care Inspectorate visited the Nursery in 2021 the report was very good.

The school is also working towards the awards of: Green flag- Eco Schools, Reading Schools Award, Rights Respecting Schools, and further Sports Awards.

Inspection timeline

Drumblade School was originally inspected in June 2018 with the report published in October 2018. The key findings from that report were –

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work :

- Polite, well-mannered children who are eager to learn.
- The positive relationship between teachers and children, built on mutual respect.
- The caring, nurturing and inclusive ethos within the nursery that is having a positive impact on children's wellbeing.

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- The improvements to the nursery indoor and outdoor learning environments, to support and enhance children's play.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the Head Teacher and a representative from Aberdeenshire Council :

- Establish strategic leadership and management procedures across all areas of the school and nursery, as matter of urgency.
- In order to ensure progression in learning and raised attainment, ensure effective transition arrangements are in place for all learners from nursery to P1, stage to stage and P7 to S1.
- Review the school curriculum in order to ensure appropriate breadth, pace, challenge and engagement for all learners.
- Improve school approaches to ensuring children's wellbeing, equality and inclusion. In doing so, ensure the needs of children with additional support needs are understood and addressed. Put in place effective systems to prepare plans and store information confidentially.
- Review Safeguarding procedures as matter of urgency.
- Improve approaches to planning learning teaching and assessment and develop effective monitoring and tracking of children's progress and attainment.

Following this school inspection and based on findings Education Scotland determined to revisit the school within 6 months. This visit was delayed due to covid restrictions and the revisit did not take place until January 2022. From that visit and the published letter to parents in March 2022 Education Scotland noted that 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 implementing plans to support recovery. The acting headteacher and staff have also been making progress in taking forward the areas for improvement from the original inspection.

We were asked to provide Education Scotland with further information about the school's progress within one year of the publication of this letter.

Update on Progress

The progress update will be structured around the six key areas originally identified as areas for improvement.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT :

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1. Review Safeguarding procedures as matter of urgency

It is clear that all staff have taken steps to ensure that they keep all children safe. We are happy that all safeguarding measures are in place and are robustly followed. The Head Teacher has completed more Child protection training- 'Designated Child Protection Officer Training' which had a focus on Early Years and which has deepened her understanding. This has been supplemented with further training on the 'Know Me Teach Me' training resource. All staff are regularly using, updating and reviewing their use of pastoral notes as a means to ensure a collective understanding of the pupils at the school. The Head Teacher has introduced 'Safeguarding' as a standard item on the weekly staff meeting agenda allowing for more detailed discussions to take place to ensure that all staff have the relevant information required to support all pupils. All staff continue to undertake the relevant update training in Child protection, GIRFEC, and PREVENT and this includes an understanding of further Child Protection training following updated guidance coming from the Authority over the next few weeks.

2. Improve school approaches to ensuring children's wellbeing, equality and inclusion. In doing so, ensure the needs of children with additional support needs are understood and addressed. Put in place effective systems to prepare plans and store information confidentially

The visit in January 2022 clearly recognised the improvements the Head Teacher and her staff had introduced. From this visit the following points were made:

Staff should ensure children and parents are fully involved in planning and reviewing support plans.

We are very clear that there is wide and comprehensive pupil and parental engagement on all aspects of school life.

Parents are fully involved in all aspects of meeting pupil need, for example; as part of the decision making around development of a child's plan and on entry into and progress being made where an additional support need has been identified. Along with the annual round of parent/staff meetings, parents are also able to access their child's teacher to arrange a specific meeting to engage in further discussion. This time is built into the school's Working Time agreement.

Pupil Equity Funding is widely consulted on across pupil, parent and staff cohorts. There is an active and supportive Parent Council and Parent Support group at the school. The Parent Council participate in the development of School Improvement Plans. Pupils are able to regularly showcase their learning through 'open days' and regular newsletters home.

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The Pupil Council who are known as the L.I.T (Learning Improvement Team) meet weekly to discuss, plan and develop many areas in the school meeting with a teacher and then later meeting with the Head Teacher. They also collect ideas and feedback from the wider pupil group in an anonymous comments box and in discussion assemblies. This work encourages the pupils to use their voice to assist in decision making on the life and work of the school.

Staff should continue to develop children's understanding of wellbeing.

Staff have had specific training on Child Protection, GIRFEC and PREVENT training. Well-being is embedded across the curriculum and all staff are aware that this is the responsibility of all. Pupils have designed leaflets and presented assemblies on the Health and Wellbeing indicators. All classes have worked on class charters reflecting on the Rights Respecting Schools articles. Staff have participated in two recent workshops working on the articles and promoting positive learning strategies. Staff are beginning to embed this work into their lesson design and curricular delivery.

The L.I.T are working on the school behaviour system bringing it up to date, as they feel there needs to be adjustments after covid 19. This process is being led by the pupils and involves collaboration with school staff as well as consultation with all pupils, staff and parents.

Staff are continuing to develop their outdoor learning programme

Having spent a recent In Service day developing the schools Outdoor Classroom. The Pupils have participated by investing in a project to provide the classroom with sustainable renewable energy to light the working area. The P1/2 pupils work weekly outdoors with the Nursery pupils in a variety of science play based learning.

3. Establish strategic leadership and management procedures across all areas of the school and Nursery

From the report in January 2022 the following was commented on in relation to this area for development –

It will be important that the acting headteacher and staff maintain robust and systematic tracking of improvement priorities and the subsequent impact they are having on learners

The school and all staff work within a robust tracking and monitoring system. This T&M process supports detailed and consistent staff discussion on target setting, predictions and further supports pace and challenge within the class areas.



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All pupils have structured time set aside to discuss their learning with their teacher. All teachers have structured time built into the T&M process and into their Working Time agreement to allow for dialogue with the Head Teacher on each individual pupil. Structured time is also set aside for the Additional Support For Learning teacher to have dialogue with class teachers on targeted pupils. The Head teacher recognises the important part PSA staff have in the learning journey of pupils and has set aside time for all PSA staff to meet as appropriate with class teachers to discuss pupil progress and needs. There are weekly collegiate meetings with teaching staff to discuss all pupils who may have additional support required for example within a Child's Plan. This information is also shared with appropriate PSA staff so they are fully aware of their role in the learning journeys.

4. Progression in learning and raised attainment, to ensure effective transition arrangements are in place for all learners from Nursery to P1 stage to stage and P7 to S1

From the visit in January 2022 the following was noted –

Practitioners introduced visits, following the easing of restrictions for new children and parents at the end of the day to allow them to engage in person

Staff should now build on this to develop further approaches to transition to ensure all children make the best possible progress

It is clear that all transitions within Drumblade School are robust and effective. The school has planned and put transition programs in place to support all children as they move from class to class, stage to stage and move from their nursery class into primary 1. The transition from p7 into The Gordon Schools is well managed along with staff from feeder primary schools and the lead DHT from the Academy. Transitions have returned to face to face meetings and face to face opportunities for parents to visit the school, meet staff, see the setting and enter into dialogue with their child's class teacher. From evidence gathered from parents from questionnaires they completed it is clear these face to face parent workshops for primary children and the 'stay and play' opportunities for nursery children were well received and effective.

5. School curriculum, appropriate depth, breadth, pace and challenge and engagement with all learners

From the visit in January 2022 the following was noted –

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There is scope for staff across the early level to explore ways for children and staff to work together

The school should now develop an approach to share the school's curriculum more widely

Staff across the school are working closely together to plan curricular delivery. Staff are now sharing their planning to support pace and challenge across a level. This is supporting staff develop a shared understanding of effective practice in for example; effective feedback, differentiation and effective questioning. Staff feedback clearly states that this is supporting progression in learning and highlighting areas that need further developed. Talk for Writing is having an impact on Learning and Teaching equipping the Teachers and building confidence in the pupils.

Staff across the early level work closely together as per above to plan appropriate curricular delivery for all nursery to p2 children. Staff are now able to share effective practice such as play based learning, and are operating a team teaching approach when appropriate. This helps utilise the teachers strengths and both class groups benefit from it. It also encourages good practice as the team teachers are critiquing the lesson and discussing next steps together.

Early level staff are involving children in the decision making around their learning journeys. This is clearly helping the children to further develop their understanding of where they are in thire learning journey and what their next steps are. Staff have developed a pictorial approach to the curriculum. This is in development and is designed to assist all stakeholders develop their understanding of the curriculum at the early level. Staff along with the Head Teacher will be monitoring the progress of this approach through robust consultation and dialogue with appropriate stakeholder groups.

6. Improve approaches to planning learning teaching and assessment and develop effective monitoring and tracking of children's progress and attainment

Following the visit in January 2022 the following was noted –

It would be helpful to provide children with more opportunities to be clearer of their strengths and next steps in learning. Staff should implement the newly developed talking and listening tool, as planned

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Staff have implemented the new Talking and listening tool (T&L) across the school. This has been shared with parents. The T&L tool is being used effectively along with other IT dependent platforms to share learning and decide on next steps. Staff are using these approaches consistently across the school. The various platforms being used are Seesaw, Google classrooms and Marvelous Me and these are supporting the work ongoing in class. Pupils are clear on their targets and help set them along with the class teacher following regular pupil/teacher meetings. These targets are supporting children's understanding and ability to set their next steps.

Summary

We are extremely pleased with the continued progress the Head Teacher has led over the last 4 years at Drumblade School. It is clear that her leadership and management has effectively led the school through some challenging times. These would include the original inspection in 2018 and the subsequent areas for development, through covid and through the various storms that have hit Aberdeenshire. We are extremely comfortable with and confident in the Head Teacher's ability to continue to support the school and the learning journeys of every pupil. This position is supported through consultation with the Parent Council and with elected members.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Wood
Quality Improvement Manager