

Introduction

This report provides a brief summary of the school's strengths, achievements and areas for improvement in the session 2015/16. Further information is available on request from the school office. If you wish to make any comment, or become involved in the work of the school, please contact the head teacher. In Curriculum for Excellence, "early level/stage" refers broadly to Nursery and P1, "first level/stage" to P2 to P4 and "second level/stage" to P5 to P7.

The school is currently undergoing an extensive refurbishment which is due to be completed in March 2017. There will be a complete rewiring as well as updating of the heating system. The whole school will be redecorated with new flooring, paintwork, windows and external doors. There will be new and additional toilets. Nursery will be moving up to the area beside our P1 classes and two new modular classrooms have been built for our P2 classes. Although there is considerable upheaval and displacement during the refurbishment, we are confident that the end result will be well worth it.



How well do children learn and achieve?

Children at St Gerardine are generally making very good progress in their learning. P1 standardised testing results (PIPS) continue to show excellent "value added" from the start to the end of the year in both literacy and numeracy which are a strong focus for our youngest children. This very good start is built on over the subsequent years and children's test results (InCAS) in P3 and P6 continue to show that in general children are attaining levels in literacy and numeracy appropriate to their age or in many cases above their chronological age. The school's own assessments of the children, together with annual standardised tests in reading and spelling, also support that our children are making good progress within Curriculum for Excellence levels. As part of Scotland's commitment to close the attainment gap for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the school has been looking at this area and teachers are working proactively to engage with families and support these children to ensure that they are attaining appropriately or that their attainment is improving.

Observations of classes throughout the year have shown that there is a strong focus on learning across the whole school. Our children are very much engaged in their learning, motivated to do well and are able to use the language of learning appropriately. Assessment for Learning (AfL) is very well embedded across all classes. As well as learning outcomes and success criteria being shared consistently, children are able to talk about the relevance of their learning to the world beyond school. The pace of learning across

classes has improved and children report that their learning is fun and enjoyable. There is high quality and effective questioning of children which challenges the children's thinking and children are becoming increasingly skilled in thinking up their own range of questions to ask. In addition to the teacher assessing the children's work, the children practise self and peer assessment, particularly in writing tasks. The children receive meaningful and specific feedback on their learning, related to the learning outcome and success criteria.

Children at St Gerardine have an excellent range of activities and opportunities offered to them. The school has worked to incorporate outdoor learning into the life of the school. Staff have developed resources to support literacy, numeracy and other areas of the curriculum being taught outside. In addition, they have looked at risk benefit assessments across a range of local areas (beach, forest, quarry etc.) and these areas have added to the school grounds to provide a rich resource for our children to access and learn from. Children and parents report that they love their outdoor learning and they are always very enthusiastic and motivated when they are learning in the outdoors. It has had additional health benefits and staff feel that children are fitter when working regularly outside. Our well established Councils and Committees allow the children to work in a mixed age group for the year which encourages the children to work together and support each other. The children enjoy these groups and the opportunities they afford to make a real difference to the school. The Pupil Council, for example, is addressing the issue of dog fouling on the school field and has helped to design signs, posters and leaflets aimed at improving the situation. The Eco Committee is helping to design the area at the back of the school which will be improved following the refurbishment.



The school will continue to address closing the attainment gap and to monitor children's progress. We are also looking at the development of an effective monitoring and tracking system to ensure progression across all curricular areas and to track pupil Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy. This will entail some moderation of literacy and numeracy, initially within the school and then across the Associated School Group (ASG: Lossiemouth High, St Gerardine, Hythehill, Hopeman and Burghead).

Our Nursery was inspected by the Care Commission in March 2015 and achieved "very good" across all four areas assessed (Quality of Care and Support; Quality of Environment; Quality of Staffing; Quality of Management and Leadership). There were no requirements or recommendations made and the improvements outlined were to continue to build on the current very good practice.

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

The school has a clear and shared vision and curriculum rationale which staff continue to build and reflect on. Our school values are well embedded and there is a positive ethos throughout school with parents and visitors often commenting on the calm atmosphere, smiling faces and clear work ethic which they see when they visit the school and classes.

Following our Depute Headteacher's work with Scottish Survey of Literacy & Numeracy (SSLN) on Listening and Talking and subsequent input for our staff on the subject, teachers have worked together to develop listening & talking progressions across levels which they can use both discreetly and in combination with other curricular areas. From P3-7 a progression of class presentation topics has been agreed to ensure progression and variety. These developments have given listening and talking a clearer focus for pupils and they are engaging well with their class talks.

The school has been involved in the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC) to develop science within the school and across the ASG. Two class teachers were trained by SSERC and have delivered training to the rest of the staff and the ASG. They have also been there to support staff, organise resources and lead this initiative. There has been improved staff understanding and confidence to deliver science Experiences & Outcomes. Staff have also worked on developing progressions of scientific knowledge, understanding and skills across the levels from Early to Second, incorporating Rich Tasks and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) within both science based Interdisciplinary topics (IDLs) and discreet science lessons. Children are thoroughly enjoying their science lessons, are highly motivated both by the hands-on and exciting nature of the science experiments and by the fact that the tasks are open-ended and the children do not know what the outcome will be.

Following the Scottish Government's policy of "1 + 2" whereby children learn a language other than English from P1, staff have now been trained to deliver French from P1 onwards. Today's children are growing up in a multilingual world and the ability to communicate effectively in social, academic and commercial settings is crucial if they are to play their full part as global citizens. The training has helped staff to integrate and embed modern languages into everyday classroom situations. For example, children may do their register in French, learn greetings, songs and common everyday French phrases. The aim will be to introduce a third language (Spanish) from P5 in the future and, in addition to learning some Spanish language, children will learn more about Spain and its culture.



We continue to have very positive relations with our parent body, many of whom are very involved with the school and with their child's learning. In particular, the success of shared learning is very significant as this involves parents in their child's learning from the outset. This is very popular in nursery and P1 and parents have a clear picture of their child's school setting and what and how they are learning. It enables parents to support their child more confidently at home and they are able to focus on very specific areas of learning

which reflect what is happening in the classroom. Recent initiatives in school have required a significant number of parent volunteers in order to be successful (eg. regular helpers in younger classes, support for outdoor learning trips and cooking etc.). Parents are very supportive of the school and those who do not have other commitments are very generous with the time they give to the school. Open afternoons are very popular with parents and again allow parents to have an insight into what and how their children are learning. In Nursery, a focus group and child voice sessions have been successfully introduced and again allow parents to participate more fully in decisions about the nursery and their child's learning. We have a very active Parent Council & Fundraising Group who meet regularly and support the school, both in its learning and teaching and also by providing very significant help with buying resources, paying for buses for class trips and sporting activities etc. They also provide a range of fun activities for the children such as discos, Easter egg hunts and barbeques. There has been improved communication with parents using texts when necessary, a weekly bulletin on the website, "Dojo" points and information or photos which parents can access from their phones and a new TV monitor which is visible from the playground and can display information about upcoming events or important notices.



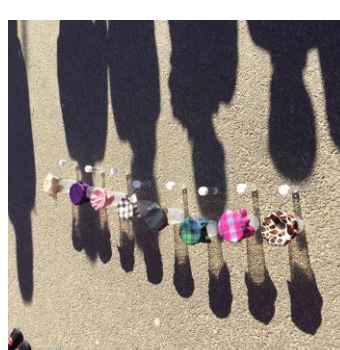
Learners' needs are met in school through differentiated learning within class which is well established. There is also clear and effective support from Support for Learning (SFL) staff where a specific need is identified (either in class or out of class, individually or in groups). Educational Auxiliary staff who support specific children are very effective in supporting the children they work with to keep focused on their work and to make progress from their current level. In addition, we have good support from other staff and agencies where a specific need is identified (MOD youth worker, Home School Link Worker, Children 1st, Quarriers, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Early Years' Service, English as an Additional Language, Sensory Support Service, Social Work etc.). There are specific programmes in place to support a wide variety of pupils' needs (eg. Kidskills, Smart Moves, Lexia, Toe by Toe, Word Wasp, Seasons for Growth, Circle of Friends etc.) and these are used as and when a need is identified. There is effective transition planning tailored to individual children, in particular at key points such as nursery to P1 and P7 to High School where this may take place over several weeks or, in some cases, a full year (or longer). Enhanced transitions within the school are also planned for children who need this support. Local Integrated Assessment Procedures (LIAP) meetings are well established for the school, parents and other agencies to work together to reach successful outcomes for pupils and families.

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

We have a very hard-working and committed staff who strive to provide stimulating and engaging experiences for their pupils. There is a culture of continuous improvement and a desire to move forward for benefit of pupils and school. Staff are very positive and are willing to take on changes and new initiatives. There has been a very positive engagement with Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities. There is a high level of professional dialogue within the school.

Leadership amongst our staff continues to grow. Staff have led on a number of initiatives and developments both with the school, and across the ASG and The Authority. Examples of leading learning include Listening & Talking, Outdoor Learning, science and SSERC developments, STEM and numeracy. Support staff also lead a number of initiatives within the school such as “listening ear”, Councils & Committees, ICT devices and learning within the classroom.

We capture the views of our school community in a variety of ways. Our Child Voice groups are well established and allow every pupil in the school to have a voice and express their views about the school and its development. Recently we have asked the children their views on Outdoor Learning as well as some of the Health and Wellbeing Indicators (healthy, safe, active, achieving). Our nursery children also contribute, with the support of their parents, to their own Child Voice discussions. Children from a variety of the classes have also given feedback to the Headteacher on the learning and teaching taking place in the school as well as on any improvements they feel we could make. Some have expressed that they would like more choice in their learning and we are looking with the staff at ways to achieve this.



Parents also contribute their views in a variety of ways. As well as questionnaires, we have a very active and supportive Parent Council and Fundraising Group who raise issues at their regular meetings as appropriate. The Headteacher has also met with groups of parents from different classes to discuss the school and its progress. This has been very positive and the school has taken on board the suggestions made and is looking at how some of these could be taken forward. In particular we are looking at the suggestion of some more shared learning sessions for P2 and P3 parents and how we can inform parents about their child's learning on a more regular basis. We have also given our partners a questionnaire to gauge their opinions and responses have been very positive.

Over the coming session, we will continue to address how we can further support some of our “hard to reach” parents to be more engaged with the school and their child's learning. In addition we will start to work with the new self-evaluation tool for schools “How Good is our School 4” (HGIOS 4).



Next session our school improvement plan will include the following priorities:

1. To ensure high quality learning and teaching has maximum impact on pupils through the development of a “growth mindset” and a healthy mind and body

Staff will work in TLCs to develop their understanding of “growth mindsets” and how this can impact on children’s learning. We will link this to the development of their minds and bodies through physical exercise and the “Better Movers and Thinkers” programme.

2. To provide learners with a wide range of fun, meaningful and challenging experiences

We will develop our children’s creativity through a range of experiences and activities, including meaningful play opportunities. We will embed a progression of skills for life and work and personal attributes so that children can evaluate their personal progression and set their next steps.

3. To ensure learners’ experiences are coherent and progressive from nursery to P7

We will introduce French from P1 as part of the pupils’ daily routines.

We will develop the curriculum in RME.

We will develop tracking and monitoring of CfE levels in literacy and numeracy, together with tracking of the progression in learning across all curricular areas.

4. To close the attainment gap and reduce inequity due to family circumstances

We will support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their attainment and learn the skills and understanding needed to equip them to be a successful part of Scotland’s workforce in the future.

