



REPORT TO FORMARTINE AREA COMMITTEE – 28 JUNE 2016

EDUCATION SCOTLAND INSPECTION, PITMEDDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

1 Recommendations

1.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Consider and comment on the contents of this report,
- (ii) Endorse the Service's continuing efforts in support of its schools in the Education Scotland inspection process and in the raising of standards of attainment and achievement in all aspects of school life, and
- (iii) Agree to further reports on Education Scotland school inspections being presented.

2 Background/Discussion

2.1 Pitmedden Primary School was inspected in February 2016 as part of a national sample of primary education. (**Appendix 1** – Inspection Report).

2.2 The inspection evaluated key aspects of the work of the school at all stages including:-

- Pupils' learning and achievements
- The curriculum and meeting learning needs
- How well staff work with others to support young people's learning
- The extent to which staff and young people are actively involved in improving their school community
- Expectations of all young people
- The direction of the school

2.3 As a result of the inspection, the Inspector highlighted the following key strengths of Pitmedden Primary School;

- Teamwork of staff which leads to positive relationships and well-behaved, calm and respectful children in the school and nursery.
- Opportunities taken by children to improve aspects of the school, for example respecting children's rights.
- Effective use of digital learning across the school.
- Leadership of the head teacher which has transformed the ethos of the school and nursery.

2.4 The inspection model is based on the school's own self - evaluation, and how this is used to focus on improving outcomes for young people, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Over the course of the inspection process, the Inspector arrived at the overall evaluations for the school in relation to five core Quality Indicators. In Pitmedden Primary School, the Inspector's evaluations were as follows:

Pitmedden Primary School: Core Quality Indicators Evaluations

SCHOOL

Improvements in performance	Good
Learners' experiences	Good
Meeting learning needs	Good

NURSERY

Improvements in performance	Good
Children's experiences	Satisfactory
Meeting Learning needs	Good

Inspectors also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	Satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	Satisfactory

- 2.5 The inspector also identified a number of areas where they felt the school should continue to develop in order to improve the quality of education. These were:
- Increase opportunities taken by children to be involved in planning and leading their learning.
 - Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure children progress in all aspects of their learning.
 - Ensure self-evaluation impacts on learning and teaching and attainment.
- 2.6 Officers have put together a comprehensive action plan to address the findings of the report and to support the implementation of the recommendations.
- 2.7 The Quality Improvement Officer is working directly with the Head Teacher and staff to ensure progress is being made with action plans and agreed timescales are on track.
- 2.8 Authority Learning and Teaching Development Officers and a School Improvement Officer will also provide guidance and support materials to support the school in developing specific areas of the curriculum and self-evaluation. In addition, Early Years Support Officers will work closely with Nursery staff to address the inspection recommendations.
- 2.9 The school is well supported by the parents and wider community and the school will involve and seek the views of all stakeholders in their improvement agenda. The report has been shared with the Parent Council Chair.
- 2.10 The Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted and have no comments.

3 Staffing and Financial Implications

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the recommended actions will not have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.
- 3.2 There are no staffing, financial or policy implications arising directly from this report. It is intended that any costs will be met from existing budgets.

Maria Walker
Director of Education & Children's Service

Report prepared by Sheila Marr, Quality Improvement Officer.



Appendix 1

Dear Parent/Carer

Pitmedden Primary School and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school and nursery class. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school and nursery class support children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including the improvements in numeracy and the ethos of the school. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school and nursery class are at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the nursery and primary stages, there is a very positive ethos. The nurturing relationships help to build a positive learning environment in which children achieve well. In the nursery, children have some opportunity to take responsibility for tasks around the playroom, for example by helping to prepare snack. Most can sustain a good level of concentration on their chosen tasks. Children would benefit from having more involvement in how and what they learn and by discussing how they are getting on with their learning. At the primary stages, children are keen to learn, are attentive and enjoy the activities in which they participate. Their learning experiences beyond the classroom are enhanced through a good range of clubs, activities and committees. For example, the 'Rights Respecting Group' has played a very active part in helping children to understand their own and their peers rights. Children are responding very well to the increased relevance of numeracy tasks and are motivated by increasing opportunities to take the lead, for example in the pupil council. We have discussed with the school how children would benefit from having more opportunities to discuss and set targets to improve their learning. Almost all children achieve through participation in cultural, sporting social activities. Many develop a caring attitude through their work to raise funds for a range charities, for example Crohn's and Colitis UK. They also develop a sense of commitment by their active participation in school committees. Across the school, children develop their digital skills very well through the use of a broad range of technology.

Across the nursery and primary classes, children are making good progress with developing and applying their literacy and numeracy skills and their understanding of health and wellbeing. In the nursery, most children enjoy listening to stories and a few

can retell the story and identify their favourite character. Most children can recognise their name in print and the majority show an interest in mark-making. A few are attempting to write their name and copy other familiar words. Most are developing an awareness of number through a range of play experiences such as counting toys and familiar number rhymes, songs and stories. At the primary stages, most children are making good progress in developing their English and literacy skills. Most children display good listening skills and think carefully before discussing their ideas, particularly when talking about philosophical ideas in primary 7. By the upper stages, most children can write for a range of purposes. We have asked the school to look at how they can extend the opportunities for children to write imaginatively. Children enjoy reading and the recent introduction of the 'Bags of Books' scheme is further encouraging children in primary 5 to read and discuss books. The emphasis on improving numeracy is having a very positive impact and children are increasingly aware of the relevance of mathematics and numeracy to everyday life. Across the school, most children are making good progress in developing their numeracy and mathematics skills. In the best learning, children are able to apply these skills in real life situations. For example, as part of a focus on healthy eating, children investigated the nutritional content of school lunches and converted the figures to percentages in order to display the data as a pie chart. They also used bar graphs and line graphs to show the impact of their circuit training during PE lessons. Across the school, children are developing a good understanding of how to keep healthy and make appropriate choices. Primary 7 children understand how a democracy works and are developing their understanding of the party political system. The recent work on being positive about learning is helping children to persevere and not lose heart when they do not get things right the first time.

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

The headteacher and staff work effectively to meet the needs of children in the nursery and school. In the nursery, staff form very positive relationships and know the children very well. This helps staff to meet the learning needs of individuals in the play room. Across the school, most tasks and activities are well matched to the needs of children. There is scope to challenge a number of children more, including those who are higher-attaining. Staff meet the needs of children requiring additional support very well through targeted support, group work and support in class. We have asked the school to look at ways to increase the amount of support provided in class by the specialist support teacher. There are educational plans in place for all children who need them.

These have appropriate targets and are reviewed regularly to ensure effective support is provided. The school uses its links with a range of partners very well to improve children's learning and wellbeing. Staff are adept at supporting families to help their children to learn.

Across the school and nursery, the curriculum is based on a clear rationale which has been discussed with parents, pupils and staff. Staff in the nursery are developing their confidence in using Curriculum for Excellence. Children in the nursery would benefit from more time spent learning outdoors. Staff in the school have made promising progress in using Curriculum for Excellence guidance to plan effectively for learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They are at the early stages of planning for progression in other areas of children's learning. We have asked them to increase the pace of developing across all curriculum areas. Staff in school work well with a

range of partners such as the National Trust to develop and enhance some areas of the curriculum. Digital technologies are used very well across all aspects of learning. The school and nursery manage transitions into and out of their respective settings very well, which helps children to maintain their progress in learning.

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

The headteacher is committed to the continuous improvement of Pitmedden Primary School. She is very well respected by the school community and is very effective in ensuring there is an appropriate environment and ethos in which children can learn and achieve. She is very well supported by the strong teamwork demonstrated by staff in taking forward the much needed improvements. There is a clear recognition amongst staff of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. They are keen to develop how they lead the areas which need to be improved. Children are increasingly involved in leading work which helps to improve their school. There are a range of approaches in place to evaluate the work of the school. For example, pupils receive a letter from the headteacher asking them to prepare a report on what is improving across the school and what could be better. As they move forward we have asked staff to ensure that they evaluate the work of the school against clear and measurable targets. This will help to evidence the impact of improvements on learning, attainment and achievement. It is also important that teachers in the school share their approaches to improvement with staff in the nursery to ensure a consistent level of evaluation in both settings.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the school had one requirement and three recommendations. From these one requirement has been met. Outstanding issues relating to outside play, staff training and development and quality assurance are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and four recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Teamwork of staff which leads to positive relationships and well-behaved, calm and respectful children in the school and nursery.
- Opportunities taken by children to improve aspects of the school, for example respecting children's rights.

Effective use of digital learning across the school.

Leadership of the headteacher which has transformed the ethos of the school and nursery.

We discussed with staff and Aberdeenshire Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

Increase opportunities in the nursery for children to be involved in planning and leading their learning.

Continue to develop the curriculum to ensure children progress in all aspects of their learning.

- Ensure self-evaluation impacts on learning and teaching and attainment.



What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Aberdeenshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

David Gregory
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/PitmeddenSchoolAberdeenshire.asp>

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