

Progress Report for Sacred Heart Primary School and Nursery class

Report by Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer, Children, Young People and Partnerships.

Report for Information

1 Recommendations

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- (i) Note the content of this progress report.
- (ii) Congratulate the pupils, parents and staff connected with this report.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The report outlines the progress made at Sacred Heart Primary School and Nursery class since the Education Scotland inspection report of May 2023.

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3 Background

3.1 Sacred Heart Primary and Nursery class was inspected by Education Scotland in March 2023. A return visit was made in April 2024.

3.2 In March 2023 Education Scotland carried out a full model inspection using core quality indicators from How Good is Our School and How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare;

HGIOS

QI	1.3	Leadership of Change
QI	2.3	Learning, teaching and assessment
QI	3.1	Ensuring Equality, Wellbeing and Inclusion
QI	3.2	Raising attainment and achievement

3.3 The inspection report made the following recommendations:

- Staff should work together to ensure all children experience high quality learning and teaching. In doing so, staff should improve the planning of learning, teaching and assessment and ensure all children receive their entitlement to a broad curriculum.
- Teachers should continue to work together to raise attainment. They should increase their understanding of national expectations about what children can achieve across all areas of the curriculum.
- Staff should improve approaches to how they monitor children's progress in learning. They should use information on children's progress more effectively to raise attainment and improve how children's needs are met across the school and nursery.
- Staff should improve the quality of learning through play across the early level.

3.4 On the return visit in April 2024 the Education Scotland report noted progress in the previous recommendations. The previous recommendations and areas of improvement are noted below.

Staff should work together to ensure all children experience high quality learning and teaching. In doing so, staff should improve the planning of learning, teaching and assessment and ensure all children receive their entitlement to a broad curriculum.

All staff put children's needs and providing a secure and nurturing learning environment at the centre of their work. The acting headteacher has maintained a steadfast focus on bringing about change and improvement. There are positive relationships within all classes. All children are members of the new pupil voice groups. This is enhancing children's opportunities to be active participants in the school and share their views.

Senior leaders and staff have worked together well to develop their understanding of high-quality learning and teaching and improve children's learning experiences. Senior leaders and staff have reviewed and refreshed the school's learning, teaching and assessment policy. They have made considerable improvements to the planning of learning, teaching and assessment which is helping to improve the quality of

teaching. In all classes, children use digital technology independently to support and enhance their learning.

The acting headteacher has created a helpful planning guidance document which outlines planning expectations and guidelines for all staff. Teachers now plan across different timescales in all curricular areas using the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). As a result, children experience a breadth of learning across the curriculum. Teachers now include children's views in the planning process. This is helping to motivate and engage children in their learning. The acting headteacher has developed a useful assessment calendar. Teachers use their assessments to support their professional judgements about children's attainment of CfE levels and move children's learning forward.

Practitioners' collaborative working hours in the nursery have been re-organised. This is giving the team more time to participate in shared planning and professional learning.

The recently appointed depute headteacher and senior practitioner now participate in weekly planning meetings with practitioners. There are now more consistent approaches to the planning of children's learning across the nursery which is improving children's experiences. Practitioners have undertaken professional learning on using observations to record and then plan children's learning. They are making more effective use of the school's planning and observation formats to capture children's learning.

Teachers should continue to work together to raise attainment. They should increase their understanding of national expectations about what children can achieve across all areas of the curriculum.

Senior leaders and staff have made strong progress in raising attainment across the school. Overall, staff have raised levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Children are making better progress. Most children are achieving expected CfE levels for literacy and numeracy. The majority of children who receive additional support for their learning are achieving nationally expected CfE levels. Across the school, there are a few children who exceed national expectations in certain aspects of a CfE level.

Senior leaders and staff have worked together well to develop a raising attainment strategy. Staff have worked closely with the Midlothian Council raising attainment teachers and undertaken valuable professional learning. This professional learning is increasing teachers' confidence and skills in delivering effective teaching. Senior leaders protect time for teachers to moderate children's work. Teachers have focused on children's writing. As a result, teachers now have a better understanding of assessment of writing and a shared understanding of standards. They use their discussions effectively to identify specific next steps in writing for groups and individuals. This is helping to raise attainment in writing across the school.

The newly introduced Midlothian Council data dashboard helps senior leaders to effectively monitor and track the progress of individuals, cohorts and classes. This, along with teachers' increasing use of the national Benchmarks, is improving teachers' understanding of national expectations in literacy and numeracy.

Staff should improve approaches to how they monitor children's progress in learning. They should use information on children's progress more effectively to raise attainment and improve how children's needs are met across the school and nursery.

Across the school and nursery, senior leaders and staff have made positive progress in monitoring children's progress in learning. This is helping them to meet children's needs more effectively across the school and raise attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

The acting headteacher has introduced more robust processes to monitor and track children's progress. Senior leaders and staff now have detailed data about children's progress and attainment. This more strategic approach is supporting staff well to develop a clearer understanding of children's progress.

Teachers and senior leaders now identify children who require targeted support to address gaps in their attainment. Teachers focus more carefully on removing barriers to learning to meet children's needs and ensure they make progress. Senior leaders have a clear overview of interventions and gather evidence which demonstrates that these approaches are closing gaps in children's attainment. Learning assistants provide valuable small group interventions and are instrumental in helping to meet children's needs. As a result, children, including those requiring additional support, make better progress in their learning.

Staff received valuable professional learning on progression through CfE levels in reading. This is increasing their understanding of progress and is raising attainment in reading. Teachers use progression pathways in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing which are supporting them well to develop an understanding of breadth in learning. Teachers should continue to use these pathways to support further their understanding of progression through CfE levels.

Across the school and nursery staff support children's progress in health and wellbeing effectively. Children in the school complete surveys using the wellbeing indicators to highlight areas where they feel more secure and less secure. Staff use this information well to plan the health and wellbeing curriculum and ensure children make progress in this area.

Practitioners in the nursery support children to understand their emotions well. Children are happy in the setting and enjoy their play and learning. Practitioners' improving skills in planning are helping them well to identify the progress children make. All staff in the nursery team know children well. Practitioners now take small 'gather groups' to develop children's key skills. They identify children who require additional support in specific areas and put targeted interventions in place. This is having a positive impact on children's early communication skills.

Senior leaders identify that providing children with the correct level of challenge in their learning is an area for further development across the school and nursery.

Staff should improve the quality of learning through play across the early level.

Teachers and practitioners receive regular support from local authority officers to review and improve approaches to learning through play. They have made clear progress in this area. The acting depute headteacher is providing valuable guidance to staff in improving the quality of play across the early level.

Staff in the school have been proactive in accessing professional learning and national practice guidance to improve their understanding of play-based learning. Practitioners in the nursery supported school staff well to make significant improvements to the learning environment. Children now have access to a wider range of natural materials and everyday objects within a stimulating environment. Most children are confident and independent in their learning. They enjoy capturing their learning and sharing it to the school's online platform. Children discuss

confidently the Midlothian Learners' skills they are developing such as creativity and curiosity.

Within the nursery, the senior practitioner and the team collaborate well to improve all children's experiences. Children in the nursery are now more involved in the life of the school. Practitioners have increased parental engagement through providing parents with 'stay and play' sessions. This is increasing children's motivation in their play and development. The nursery environment and resources are stimulating and engaging for children. Practitioners interact positively and sensitively with children encouraging them in their play and learning. Practitioners benefit from working together to moderate their observations of children's learning. This is helping them to develop a shared understanding of high-quality learning through play and make judgements about children's progress. Practitioners should continue to ensure they provide children with increasing levels of challenge to deepen their learning.

Practitioners in the nursery, and staff across the school, work together well to provide children with a few shared learning experiences using the joint outdoor space between the school and nursery. They should build on this positive practice and increase these opportunities. This will support children's continuity of learning across early level. Practitioners and school staff have a clear understanding of the rationale for play-based learning and are well-placed to take this work forward.

3.5 Identified areas for further improvement

- Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop approaches to outdoor learning. Children are keen to use the spacious school grounds more frequently.
- A few parents would welcome more information about how their child is assessed and the progress their child is making. They would also welcome more opportunities to come into school to share in their child's learning.
- As planned, practitioners should continue to work together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality observations.
- Teachers should continue to develop their understanding and use of data to raise attainment in all curricular areas.
- Staff across the school and nursery would benefit from further professional learning in planning and delivering high-quality learning that is set at different levels of difficulty.

3.5 Conclusion

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. Education Scotland are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The setting's Quality Improvement Manager will continue to monitor improvement through the quality improvement process and standards and quality improvement plan.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

There are no resource implications.

4.2 Digital

There are no digital implications.

4.3 Risk

Education Scotland's team of Inspectors visit a sample of education settings every year to find out how they are performing. A report is published which informs parents about the key strengths of the setting and its capacity for further improvement.

Following the publication of the report further visits may be made to the setting, by the Education Authority to assist improvement and monitor progress.

Monitoring, review and evaluation of progress by central officers in the Education Team is the control measure in place to reduce the risk of failure of settings to demonstrate their capacity to improve.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background Papers: [Sacred Heart Primary School further visit](#)

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Themes addressed in this report:

Getting it right for every Midlothian child
Improving opportunities in Midlothian

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based

- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Noted within.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Copies of the reports have been made available to Elected Members, parents and carers of children currently in the setting and other interested parties.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The setting will continue to improve its work in line with the school improvement plan and central officers in the Education Team will continue to challenge and support the setting in relation to developing and implementing a range of quality improvement strategies.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Education (Scotland) Bill aims to take preventative action in order to close the attainment versus deprivation gap by implementing key policies and programmes which are designed to target support to children and young people from disadvantaged communities. Midlothian is highly committed to closing the poverty related attainment gap.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The School and Nursery Improvement Plan allows for sustainable development and improvement.