

30 August 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Southmuir Primary School and Nursery Class Angus Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's school. Throughout our visit we talked to many parents and children and we worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children were learning and achieving and how well the school supported 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 innovative approaches to learning, positive behaviour management and ways in which children are involved in improving the school. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

#### **How well do children learn and achieve?**

We found that children are confident, motivated and engage well in their learning. In the nursery class, children are happy and settled. They have good friendships and play very well together. Children enjoy their play experiences and are making good progress in their learning. Almost all children show high levels of motivation during outdoor play. In the Rainbow Room, children work well on tasks and enjoy their learning. They particularly enjoy their signing circle time. Across the school, staff involve children successfully in planning aspects of what they are learning. They discuss learning using the very effective 'learning walls' and 'scrap books'. We think this is working very well. Children have presented successfully to parents at a 'Learners for Excellence Evening'. In all classes, children are becoming increasingly active in their learning and work well together. For example, children in P4 and P6 engaged very well with activities around their 'Farmhouse Breakfast'. Children take part in a wide range of out-of-school activities such as basketball, football and a signing choir. Children enjoy learning in the well-developed school grounds including the polytunnel. We think that you as parents support children's learning very well through, for example, helping in school, running the playground tuckshop and through the Parent Council.

Most children are developing their literacy and numeracy skills well. In the nursery, children enjoy listening to stories and singing nursery rhymes and songs. They are starting to explore mark making in play contexts. Most children recognise their own names when written down. They are developing early counting skills well. Most recognise some numerals and are developing a good awareness of number order. Children use the outdoor area for energetic physical play, to learn about science and for planting and growing. In the primary classes, most children are making good progress in English language and mathematics. Almost all children talk clearly and articulately in small groups and to the class. They listen very attentively to instructions and explanations and respond enthusiastically to questions asked

by staff. However, they could listen to each other better when working in groups. Most children enjoy reading and read with confidence. Children write well for a range of purposes. The standard of presentation of children's writing is consistently high. In mathematics, most children's skills in mental and written number calculations are very good. Children show confidence in recognising the properties of shape. They can use computers successfully to create charts and graphs for a range of purposes. However, children's skills in identifying and using problem solving strategies could be improved. Across the school, children are developing very good skills in art and design. As a result of this, there are many examples of good-quality art work on display around the school. Children achieve very well in a wide range of musical activities. They are developing a very good knowledge of global issues through their very successful link with a school in Kenya. Through activities such as acting as tellers in the school bank, children are developing a positive awareness of enterprise skills.

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

Overall, the school and nursery class provide good support for your children to develop and learn. Children benefit from a broad curriculum which develops their skills in key curricular areas. Staff use the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence well when planning children's learning. Across the school and nursery, staff interact effectively with children. They give clear explanations and on most occasions tell children the purpose of activities. Most of the time tasks and activities are set at an appropriate level of difficulty for children. However, staff need to ensure all children are challenged consistently well in their learning. They should continue to work with children to help them to identify their next steps in learning. Support for learning staff work very effectively with children who need additional help with their learning. Their learning needs are met very well. Children in the Rainbow Room are well supported both in their base and in their primary class. Staff work successfully with other services to support children. These include the Educational Psychologist, NHS and School and Family Support Services. The school's positive behaviour policy, 'Make 10', is working very well. The school has very positive links with the local community and uses them well. For example, at P4 children went on a 'litter pick' with the local police. Children are supporting the local community by assisting in the development of Davidson Park. Recently, children from the nursery helped celebrate the tenth anniversary of the local museum.

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

We are confident that your school will continue to improve the quality of its work. Children have a strong say in how to improve the school. They do this very well through, for example, the pupil council, the library construction committee and acting as buddies to younger children. Children are very active in making improvements to their school playground. Staff have plans to develop children's involvement even further. The headteacher regularly surveys the views of staff, children and parents to inform school improvements. The senior management team uses a range of successful strategies to monitor the work of the school and track children's progress. However, the school could develop some of these even further. The senior management team and staff are committed to the school and to making school improvements. This, together with the very effective leadership of the headteacher, puts your school in a strong position to continue to improve.

This inspection of your school and nursery class found the following key strengths.

- Polite, well-behaved and enthusiastic children who enjoy their role in improving the school.
- The very welcoming and inclusive ethos.
- High-quality, stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences.

- Partnership working with parents and the wider community.
- Teamwork of staff, led by the effective leadership of the headteacher.

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

- Ensure tasks, activities and the pace of learning meet the needs of all children consistently well.
- Continue to develop Curriculum for Excellence.

### **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. The local authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

Alan Urquhart  
HM Inspector  
30 August 2011

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the HMIE website at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/ViewEstablishment.aspx?id=7042&type=2>.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk). Alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600259.