



Education Scotland
Follow Through



St John's Primary School

April 2022



Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences

Background

Education Scotland published a report on the standards and quality of St John's Primary School on 23rd June 2020. The school compiled an action plan to address the main points of the report.

The school was evaluated by Education Scotland and judged to be good in improvements in Leadership of Change, Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Raising Attainment and Achievement. The school was judged to be very good in Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion.

Following the Education Scotland inspection, the Education Department made plans for the Quality Improvement Service to revisit the school within 2 years of the date of publication to review the impact of the school's improvement plan in addressing the agreed areas for improvement and to provide a progress report to parents and elected members.

A newly appointed acting Head Teacher took up post in June 2021 and was subsequently appointed on a permanent basis in March 2022. Since March 2020 there has been ongoing disruption to society and schools. This has resulted in 2 periods of school closure, impacting on the timing of the departmental follow through visit.

A follow through visit by the Quality Improvement Team took place in April 2022.



Overview

The school had made good progress with the action points outlined in the Education Scotland report, with the following key strengths:

- ✓ The school's vision and values of Love, Faith and Understanding permeate the life and work of the school. Alongside the cluster Learner Dispositions, (Bravery, Creativity, Curiosity, Resilience, Independence) they are key drivers for change and improvement. There is a strong ethos of support, with a highly effective focus on wellbeing. This has resulted in very positive relationships across the school. All members of the school community work together in an effective way and a climate of high expectations based on mutual respect is evident. Staff demonstrate a commitment to the school's culture of collaboration with everyone working together to improve outcomes for all learners. Parental engagement is a particular strength with a genuine partnership between the school and the home evident.
- ✓ The head teacher demonstrates strategic leadership of the school. She has focused on developing a culture of learning and collaboration across the school. This has led to shared aspirations for all learners. She is assisted by a senior leadership team who, along with the head teacher, provide leadership in relation to monitoring and tracking pupil progress with a focus on raising attainment across all curriculum areas and on developing assessment approaches.
- ✓ Consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school is improving with children's experiences overall evaluated as very good. In most lessons, learning is appropriately challenging and well matched to children's needs with all children engaged and highly motivated to succeed in their learning. In almost all lessons observed children understand the purpose and relevance of their learning and are able to apply their learning and skills in new contexts. There is a clear and consistent focus on developing Visible Learning with learner voice an emerging strength.

In partnership with the head teacher, the review team identified and agreed the following next steps:

- The senior leadership team should continue to systematically embed its use of self-evaluation for self-improvement to ensure improved outcomes for all learners. In particular it should continue with its focus on supporting staff in extending their use of data to inform appropriate interventions and supports and to identify impact in order to plan next steps in learning.
- The school should continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching by looking outwards and collaborating with other schools and establishments to build on the reading and research which has already taken place.
- The school should continue to focus on developing their assessment framework as planned, ensuring it is closely linked with the curriculum and with learning and teaching.

Leadership of Change

Good Progress

- The school is developing clear and effective systems for strategic planning for improvement. The current school improvement plan clearly reflects a collective vision for improvement within the school. Priorities have a strong focus on raising attainment and recognising achievement, improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching and inclusion and supporting pupils. The head teacher should continue to monitor progress closely to ensure that priorities are manageable.
- Overall there is good strategic leadership across the school. The head teacher and senior leadership team have created a culture of collaboration at all levels. The senior leadership team and all staff share a clear vision for the school and this permeates daily practice.
- All staff share a common, well-developed understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and are fully involved in taking these forward, specifically, improvements in teaching and learning pedagogy. Priorities reflect the school's context and local and national priorities and are linked to the areas for development reported by Education Scotland in June 2020. This creates a strong sense of ownership amongst staff at all levels. Staff feel empowered to take on a range of leadership opportunities and demonstrate growing confidence to initiate and lead change.
- The school uses systematic self-evaluation to plan for change. Staff are reflective and beginning to use data to inform developments. Effective approaches to monitoring progress, including online planning, tracking meetings and professional dialogue, are providing all stakeholders with a clearer picture of attainment and progress over time. The head teacher and depute use this very well to identify and target areas for improvement.

- All staff have a good and improving understanding of the diverse social, economic and cultural context of the school and its community and are engaging in continuing professional learning to extend their use of data to develop appropriate interventions and supports for improved outcomes for all learners, including those children in key equity groups.



Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Good Progress

- The very positive relationships between staff and children are a significant strength of the school. Children are well behaved and demonstrate genuine respect towards staff and one another. Children are eager participants in their learning and motivated to succeed. The very positive learning environment is supporting learners to contribute well in lessons and challenge themselves in their learning. In most lessons, learning is appropriately challenging and well matched to their needs however there are missed opportunities to increase challenge in relation to questioning and higher order thinking. In almost all lessons observed children understand the purpose and relevance of their learning and are able to talk about what they need to do to improve further.
- Learners' achievements in and out of school are recognised, recorded and celebrated using a range of means. The 'Jewels of St John's' focus on achievement continues to support learners in understanding the skills they are developing across a range of contexts and affords genuine opportunities to celebrate success across the school community. The school's use of social media to promote this is excellent and has impacted positively on learners who are rightly proud of their

achievements. Learners take on leadership roles with enthusiasm and commitment and are beginning to lead their own learning in classrooms. As the school reintroduces various groups and committees, children will be provided with more opportunities to become involved in the life and work of the school and be able to take on leadership roles which allow them to apply their skills in real life contexts.

- Staff use a variety of approaches to engage learners in understanding their progress in learning. There is a range of opportunities for children to evaluate their learning and that of others through peer and self-assessment. There has been a focus on the work of Dylan William including effective questioning and providing feedback. Learners would benefit from a more consistent approach to feedback, ensuring that all learners understand and can contribute to assessment processes to support progress in learning.
- Tracking and monitoring of pupil progress is well-understood and is being used effectively to plan high quality experiences and secure improved outcomes for all learners including those learners in key equity groups. Professional dialogue supports the processes of assessment and is informing improvements in the consistency and quality of learning and teaching.

Raising Attainment and Achievement

Good Progress

- Attendance levels are high and improving and there are no exclusions. Inclusion in the school is a strength with innovative approaches to support providing all learners with an appropriate environment in which to learn. In particular, the development of the targeted Wellbeing Club is positively impacting on children's wellbeing and is ensuring that all learners feel included, engaged and involved in the life of the school and are making progress in their learning and development.
- The school tracks learners' participation and monitors those who are at risk of missing out to ensure that activities build on the range of talents and interests of the children. The school's Pupil Equity Fund priorities reflect the current context of the school and seek to provide opportunities for achievement of learners in key equity groups with interventions focusing on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In particular, the school's universal focus on wellbeing is commendable, highlighting the commitment to children and their families, with staff and resources prioritised and targeted appropriately using a range of data sources. The school should continue to track and monitor the use of interventions to support wellbeing and share the results of particularly successful interventions across the school and beyond.

- Attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are a central feature of the school's priorities for improvement. In particular the school's commitment to developing literacy across the school should be commended with its approaches to programmes including Reading Recovery, Daily Literacy Learning (DLL) and Together Raising Attainment in Literacy (TRAIL). This is leading to improved outcomes for learners. Trained Pupil Support Assistants successfully deliver Together Better Readers (TBR) and will also be trained in the newly developed ChattERbox intervention to support oral development. The school should continue to track progress in relation to these specific interventions using agreed benchmarking assessments to gather data, identify impact and plan next steps.
- Improving confidence in teacher judgements of pupils' progress is leading to more informed professional dialogue and a systematic approach to using assessment evidence, including formal and informal opportunities for moderation. Training on the use of the tracking tool has impacted positively on staff who reported that this had been beneficial in supporting their understanding of the process. In focus groups teachers reported that they discussed learning and teaching regularly and were keen to collaborate and learn from each other. Moving forward it would be helpful if senior leaders could explore opportunities for staff to learn with and from colleagues across the cluster and beyond.

Recommendation

Overall the school has made good progress in meeting the recommendations from the HMIE Report of June 2020.

The local authority has no further plans to visit the school in relation to the report of June 2020. The Quality Improvement Service and the link Quality Improvement Officer will continue to work with, support, and closely monitor the school to ensure continuous improvement.

