

15 May 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Heathrigg Nursery School
Falkirk Council**

Recently, as you may know, I visited and inspected your child's pre-school centre. During my visit, I talked to parents and children and I worked closely with the headteacher and staff. I wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the pre-school centre supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with me the pre-school centre's successes and priorities for improvement. I looked at some particular aspects of the pre-school centre's recent work, including outdoor learning, the introduction of Learning Journey folders and planning for children's learning. As a result, I was able to find out how good the pre-school centre is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the nursery, children are learning and achieving well. The youngest children are actively involved in play. They are motivated by the activities on offer and as a result engage and concentrate well. Toddlers are beginning to make independent choices through the use of 'choosing books' which help them select what they would like to play with. Children aged three to five choose tasks independently and with a sense of purpose. They settle quickly to their activities and maintain their engagement across the session and the extended day. A significant number of children concentrate for extended periods of time in activities such as art, early writing and building with construction materials. Children cooperate well with each other and work together to investigate and solve problems. Recently, children had worked together with their families and staff to raise money for a national fundraising event. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as the care of the nursery garden and helping prepare snack. Children are working with others from the primary school to develop further their nursery garden.

Children are making very good progress in early language and mathematics. The youngest children are familiar with favourite stories and can retell parts of them. They enjoy exploring books independently and with a familiar adult. All children are making progress in developing their spoken language through songs, rhymes and meaningful conversations with the adults who care for them. The older children communicate confidently with each other and enjoy sharing their personal experiences. Almost all children listen very well in more focused activities such as story times. All children self-register at the beginning of their nursery session which

helps them practise their early writing. Children explore mark-making in many different areas of the nursery including the sand tray and on the interactive whiteboard. They are proud of their achievements and enjoy sharing them with others. In early mathematics children enjoy learning about shapes and pattern outdoors in the snow. They are able to copy and create their own patterns using a range of materials. Almost all children have an awareness of number through their nursery routines. They enjoy hunting for hidden numbers in the sand and counting to help manoeuvre a programmable toy. Children are developing an understanding of measurement through recording their heights and weighing ingredients in baking activities.

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

The nursery supports all children very well to develop and learn. Staff working with children aged under three provide a curriculum that takes appropriate account of national guidance. A range of stimulating learning experiences is provided that are personalised to meet the needs of individual children. Staff working with the older children plan together to provide a curriculum that take good account of Curriculum for Excellence. They have focused on providing quality opportunities for learning in literacy and numeracy. As a result, there are now good opportunities for children to explore and develop their skills in literacy and numeracy in different activities. Staff recognise that they now need to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are delivered in the same depth and provide the right amount of challenge to all children. The nursery garden is increasingly providing quality learning opportunities across the curriculum and this continues to be developed. There are appropriate arrangements in place to support children to be confident as they move on to school. Staff recognise that they now need to work more closely with school staff to ensure children continue to progress well in their learning as they move on. Interactions between staff and children are very caring and are of a consistently high quality, extending and challenging children's learning. Staff use praise effectively to recognise and celebrate success and build children's confidence. The introduction of children's Learning Journey folders are helping staff record children's progress. These could be used more to help staff talk about learning with children. Staff recognise when children may need extra help in their learning. They work together very well to support the needs of individuals. At times further help is required and staff work very well with other professionals who offer specialist support. Very positive relationships exist between families and staff. There are many worthwhile opportunities for parents to share and support their child's learning. Parents value the support that they receive from the nursery.

How well does the pre-school centre improve the quality of its work?

Staff work well together, reflect on the experiences provided for children and make changes to improve the quality of learning. Together, staff and management are keen to provide the very best quality provision for children and families. They work hard to gather the views of parents and children and continue to seek imaginative ways to ensure that everyone is included. Staff take part in a variety of training activities and share these with their colleagues. Recently, staff attended a conference organised by the local authority. This provided them with new ideas which they are using to help them improve children's learning experiences. The

management team have introduced a rigorous system to monitor the work of the nursery. This is helping identify aspects of the nursery where improvements could be made. This system now needs to be applied to all aspects of the work of the nursery to ensure maximum continued improvement. Overall, the nursery is well placed to build on its strengths and continue to improve.

My inspection of your pre-school centre found the following key strengths.

- Confident and motivated children who enjoy learning.
- Calm and purposeful learning environments that help children learn.
- Quality of staff interactions with children which support and extend learning.
- Positive and supportive relationships between staff, children and parents.

I discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the pre-school centre. This is what I agreed with them.

- Further review and develop the curriculum in line with national guidance.
- Continue to develop and implement processes to evaluate and develop the work of the nursery.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the pre-school centre's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The headteacher and local authority will inform parents about the pre-school centre's progress as part of the arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of the pre-school centre.

Barbara Daly
Managing Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/eyc/Heathri%20NurserySchoolFalkirkFalkirk.asp>

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