

Focused Review – Law Primary School (22-24 January 2018)

Introduction and Context

- Having received a significant number of parental complaints and concerns from teaching and support staff regarding matters associated with supporting the needs of children, the Education Service decided to carry out a focus review of Law Primary School. The review team was led by the Quality Improvement Manager and the team consisted of the Service Manager (ASN), the school's Quality Improvement Officer, the ASN Support Officer, a peer head teacher and an independent consultant.
- The review was focussed specifically on how well the school is meeting the needs of all children. The review team visited all classes across the school and observed a wide range of learning and teaching across the curriculum.
- Significant building works in Law Primary School are ongoing at the school.

In order to gather the views of all parents, teaching and support staff, the Education Service issued a survey. A summary of the results of the survey are noted below.

Teachers

- Overall, teachers are positive about the way they work together as a team and how they can support each other.
- They feel they have good opportunities for professional learning.
- They feel valued and that children are involved in their learning
- Around half agreed that the school has effective strategies to support children's learning including those with Additional Support Needs.
- A few don't feel supported and don't feel that communication is effective
- From the written comments received, they expressed a view that they believe they have insufficient resources to meet the needs of children and that they have not been supported by the Council

Support staff

- All understand CP procedures
- Most feel staff treat children with respect and that they treat each other with respect.
- From the written comments, significant issues were raised around lack of communication. They expressed concerns that they do not feel well enough supported to undertake their role.

Parents

- Most parents who responded to the survey think their children enjoy school and that they are treated fairly and with respect

- Majority think the school is well led and managed and are satisfied with the school
- Whilst there are positive written comments, the majority of the written feedback is very negative specifically around how the school is supporting children with additional support needs, perceptions of a lack of communication and leadership from the school senior leadership team and a strong feeling of parents losing confidence in the school.

HGIOS 4

Leadership and Management

- Staff have developed a vision, values and aims for Law Primary School. These are evident in the School Improvement Plan and relate to the school being an inclusive, ambitious learning community where every child has the opportunity to reach their potential.
- The vision is not yet sufficiently well understood or consistently applied by all staff in their day-to-day practice across the school. Work now needs to be taken forward urgently to ensure that staff' understanding of inclusive practices and their personal responsibilities are developed and that they have a clear focus on inclusion and equality for all children.
- The current turbulent situation which centres on some specific issues at P4 and P5 is having an impact on the ethos and culture within the school. Staff are 'fire-fighting' and dealing with ongoing disruption and issues associated with a small number of children – this ethos is now becoming the norm across the school.
- Working with staff, the senior leadership team now need to revisit the ethos and culture of the school based on their vision of Inclusion. The behaviours and non-inclusive language of a small number of staff now needs to be addressed through training and greater guidance and support.
- The senior leadership team now need to develop their approaches to engaging and regaining the confidence of parents. Some parents commented that they perceived the senior leadership team to be dismissive of their concerns and that they were defensive when presented with concerns and issues.
- A range of issues are impacting on the way in which the school management team can lead the school. The HT and DHTs are regularly called to classes to deal with children exhibiting distressed behaviour. The senior management team are exhausted and the nature of this fire fighting is having a detrimental impact on school improvement. SMT have identified that progress on their priorities has been slower than intended due to the ongoing situations in the school. This is leading to a reactive rather than a planned proactive approach being the norm. The lack of systems and processes are leading to more reactive approaches.

- Whilst SMT have remits and responsibilities set out, these now need to be reviewed. Their responsibilities are divided across each level of the school and specific areas are divided eg. pupil support, Child Protection and anti-bullying. These need to be reviewed to ensure that one person can have a whole school overview of a particular area of the school's work and to reduce the likelihood of mixed messages. Other issues such as a lack of clarity on responsibilities eg 'supervision' and perceptions of an imbalance across remits needs to be addressed. Given the concerns around pupil support, there is an urgent need to free up the responsibilities of the DHT responsible for pupil support to ensure she has sufficient time to deal with the range of areas requiring improvement. The Education Service will work with the school to provide additional staffing to support this to happen.
- Staff are aware of their local community and the factors affecting children in North Berwick. They are concerned about the numbers of children who are now living in deprivation and their view is that this is not represented in the SIMD profile of the school. Some staff are of the view that some of their children are not well suited to the school indicating their belief that children need to adapt to the school rather than the school adapting to meet the needs of the child.

HGIOS 4

Learning Provision

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

Theme 1 – Learning and engagement

Theme 2 – Quality of teaching

- Overall most children are positive about their learning experiences and enjoy the activities they are offered. They are engaged and motivated when learning tasks are matched to suit their needs. Learning intentions are clear in most lessons. Children are involved in their learning and set achievable targets on a monthly basis. They revisit them regularly. Most class teachers talk to children about how they can improve. They talk positively about the learning opportunities on offer, this includes outdoor learning, additional learning, opportunities for leadership and wider achievement.
- In a small number of lessons the level of challenge was insufficient. At times the activities restricted children from extending their learning. In some instances the pace of learning could be brisker.

- In most classes, learning was differentiated and matched to the majority of children's needs. Whilst this was the case in the majority of lessons, there were weaknesses in learning for a small number of children with additional support needs and specifically staff knowledge around the range of strategies to use to engage learners.
- Some lessons were over-directed by class teachers with too much time spent on teachers giving lengthy instructions. As a result, children became disengaged and this caused low level disruption.
- In the main, classes are well organised but in a few classes not all learning and teaching time was fully used to cover the totality of the curriculum. When looking at how the curriculum is planned including class timetables, it is not clear how the school is ensuring children's entitlements are being met across all curriculum areas. Senior managers now need to review this and ensure staff are clear about making good use of the learning and teaching time available. Time set aside for 'Friday Tidy' is not appropriate and closer monitoring on how time is used is required to ensure the maximum amount of time is devoted to children's learning .- there is a large amount of time allocated to Literacy, Numeracy, IDL with time on Fridays for Friday Tidy.
- In the best lessons, children offer their own ideas and opinions and build upon their prior learning. Questioning is used to check for understanding. This leads to effective cooperative group work. When lessons are differentiated effectively the learning is well matched to learners' needs. In some classes high expectations are explicit and responsibilities for learning are made clear. Learners are motivated to succeed and further progress will be made as the school develop their use of assessment quadrants. This is especially clear in the teaching of writing and science in Primary seven. This effective practice should be shared widely across the staff team to improve consistency in high quality learning and teaching.
- In most lessons teachers are confident in the use of digital technologies to enhance teaching. In a few lessons, children use digital technologies to support learning. They work independently and are developing spelling skills and numeracy skills and science knowledge to apply in their written work.
- The school is developing its approaches to gathering information and assessment data to inform teacher judgements of CfE levels. The school has made a positive start to using quadrants to support professional dialogue and track learning. The school should continue to develop this approach to bring about increased rigour to the dialogue with staff. Staff should continue to gather robust assessment information to support accurate predictions for reading, writing and numeracy. Between June 2016 and June 2017, teacher judgements were significantly more positive.

HGIOS 4

Successes and Achievements

3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing Equity and Inclusion

- Staff work hard to establish positive relationships with children. They try to include children in the life of the school through the many activities and groups available to them at lunch times and after school. These are mainly led by school staff who give freely of their own time.
- Teachers are very supportive of each other within and across stages. They share resources and offer support to new staff. Support staff would benefit from an induction period when joining the school.
- Teachers and most support staff are aware of GIRFEC and children's rights. This awareness is not yet leading to improved outcomes for children. There is a need to develop this further by involving children and parents to ensure that the principles become embedded into practice.
- Some parents report that their children do not feel safe and secure in school. A significant number of parents who made comments in the questionnaires and almost all who attended the focus groups with the review team, feel that bullying is a serious issue that is affecting their children's wellbeing and attainment. Of greater concern is their view that this is not being dealt with effectively and is becoming normalised.
- Parents of children with additional support needs who spoke to the review team felt that the notice given for review meetings was far too short.
- There is a need to develop a more consistent and coherent approach to supporting children who are experiencing difficulties with self-regulation. This is particularly evident when children are struggling to maintain their concentration or engagement during lessons.
- Teachers and support staff report that they are not meeting children's needs as well as they should. In a few classes staff are unable to keep children safe. There are situations where children are regularly being hurt by other children. This is causing high levels of stress and anxiety for staff, parents and children.
- Planning to meet individual children's needs is not effective. A number of children have in place Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) however, in a number of cases the targets and support strategies are not in place in the classroom. Children, parents and other agencies are not always involved in setting or reviewing targets. There is a need to improve systems and processes which will lead to more

effective identification of barriers to learning and support strategies. Parents, children and the team around the child should be involved in all aspects of this process. Regular monitoring and review need to focus on checking children's progress to ensure better outcomes.

- Planning to meet individual children's needs is not effective. There is a need to improve systems and processes which will lead to more effective identification of barriers to learning and support strategies. Parents, children and the team around the child should be involved in all aspects of this process. Regular monitoring and review need to focus on checking children's progress to ensure better outcomes.
- The school has yet to use the wellbeing indicators with children to help them to understand what they mean and how they can help children to assess their progress in this area. Used well, they also provide children with a common language to discuss difficult concepts like "nurtured and respected"
- Most staff speak positively about creating an inclusive learning environment for all children. There is a need to revisit what this means in Law primary school and how this translates into practice at all levels. There are many examples of very negative language in reports and discussions which do not indicate a commitment to celebrating diversity and equity. Staff often use emotive words to describe a child who is in a heightened state of arousal. This now needs to be addressed at a whole school level and clear guidance given to staff on the use of professional language when describing incidents.
- The DHT responsible for pupil support and the support for learning teacher recognise the need to review the school's approach to supporting learners who may have additional support needs. They have audited existing practice and produced a development plan to address the improvements required. Given the current concerns raised by parents and staff, the senior management team now need to work closely with the local authority to agree the actions needed in order to prioritise their implementation. For example, most staff have received training in attachment and there is capacity within the team to further develop attachment informed practice across the school. However, this is not happening as the Attachment Ambassador is not able to devote the time needed to observe learning, analyse the barriers the children are facing, create effective support plans which are then shared with the team around the child, monitored and evaluated.
- A positive behaviour support policy and practice needs to be developed based on nurturing relationships and restorative principles. Sanctions and punitive approaches such as giving children lines have no place in current practice. This is well supported by research. Another outcome of the current approach is the lack of consistency across the school in supporting children to understand their own behaviour and the affect it can have on others.
- Over-reliance on parent helpers may not be helpful in the long term. If parents are to continue to work in the classrooms they need a better understanding of the barriers children with additional support needs face and the benefits of inclusion and equity for all children. Urgent steps need to be taken to reinforce the need for confidentiality and to prevent inappropriate sharing of information.

Conclusion and next steps

Overall, whilst there are some strengths in the quality of learning and teaching in the majority of classes and in the ways in which staff support each other, there are important weaknesses. The Senior Management Team, working with the Education Service now need to ensure strong and consistent leadership in developing and fully implementing an inclusive ethos and approach across the school. A number of significant improvements are required particularly in developing inclusion across the school, developing staff skills in supporting children's needs, improving communication and building the confidence of parents.

Specific areas for improvement to be included in the action plan:

- **Improve leadership of inclusive approaches and support for all children including those with additional support needs.**
- **Developing staff skills in supporting children with specific needs including developing a range of strategies for supporting children with specific needs.**
- **Improving the use of available resources, training, support and deployment of support staff**
- **Ensure the school's approaches to promoting positive behaviour are reviewed to reduce punitive sanctions and to be more focused on children's needs and their rights.**
- **Improve parental confidence in the school and the approaches in place to support the needs of all children.**

The Education Service will continue to work with the school in developing an action plan and supporting the necessary improvements. Specifically, the Education Service will:

- **Seek to enhance staffing to allow the DHT to be fully deployed to pupil support**
- **Support the school in revising the senior management team remits.**
- **Continue to explore additional teaching support to P4 to provide additional support and ensure that all children are making appropriate progress**
- **Provide training for pupil support assistants on strategies and approaches to support children with additional support needs.**
- **Explore further specialist support for the school to build the capacity of staff in the identified areas for improvement**

Focused Review Summary – Early learning and childcare

HGIOELC Leadership and Management	
1.5 Management of resources to promote equity	Theme 2 – Management of resources and environment for learning
<p>How effective are your resources and environment in meeting the learning needs of all children and ensuring equity?</p> <p>How does the learning environment reflect that it belongs to the children and is their space in which to live and grow?</p> <p>What values and ideas regarding the learning process for young children does the environment reflect?</p>	
HGIOELC Learning Provision	
2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	Theme 1 - Learning and engagement Theme 2 - Quality of teaching Theme 3 - Effective use of assessment Theme 4 - Planning, tracking and monitoring

How well do the practitioners motivate and engage all children?

How do the practitioners know that all children are making very good progress in their learning? What information do they have?

How do the practitioners enable children to become independent learners?

How do the practitioners ensure that processes for planning, assessment and reporting are manageable and effective in improving learning and teaching?

How do the practitioners ensure that processes for tracking and monitoring are manageable and effective in improving learning and teaching?

How well does the information gathered about children's progress inform planning and improvement?

Learning Provision

2.2 Curriculum Theme 3 – Pedagogy and play

What evidence is there that children are developing a positive attitude to learning?

How do practitioners challenge and support for example creativity and problem solving with young children?

How do practitioners engage in discussion and what examples are there of this working in practice?

What routines and structures are in place? Do these support child-centred play?

Other Comments or Details

Key Strengths

Areas for Improvement

QIO/ELC officer _____ Date of visit: _____