

17 March 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Hazlehead School and Nursery Class
Aberdeen City Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports 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 the school's partnership with its associated schools group (ASG) and its commitment to global citizenship. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Children at the primary stages and in the nursery class enjoy a positive learning experience. In the nursery, most children select their own activities without adult support. They play well together for extended periods of time. For example, a small group initiated a game where they played with a box, hiding and being 'discovered' by their friends. Children are particularly enthusiastic about learning outdoors in the nearby woodland and on 'Wheely Wednesdays' when they play on scooters and bikes. Across the primary stages, children told us they are happy at Hazlehead and that they are very proud of the school. They are eager learners who are polite and well behaved. They work effectively in pairs and small groups and increasingly enjoy taking responsibility for identifying their own learning targets. At all stages, children understand what is to be learned and the purpose of their work. Staff should ensure this is described in child friendly language. Staff use information and communications technology (ICT) well to motivate children. In physical education lessons, children use tablet devices to record their activity and then analyse the film to encourage improvement. In P1, children learned counting skills using songs from YouTube clips. The school works well with a range of partners to support learning. This includes regular visits from a local BP science ambassador. Children enjoy sharing their learning with their parents through interesting homework challenges and events in school. All children participate in school ethos groups enabling them to develop leadership skills and take on responsibilities around the school. For example, the Community Group worked with a range of partners to improve the local park. Children's individual success in a wide range of sports and other activities is highlighted well in displays around the school. In the nursery classes and across the primary stages, children record their achievements in learning logs and portfolios. In the best examples, these provide a good illustration of children's learning, and suggest steps for improvement. Children at all stages feel a sense of community and have a

strong awareness of the needs of others. The school's commitment to global citizenship includes supporting learners in Kenya and Rwanda. Staff have developed good approaches to tracking and monitoring children's achievements. We have asked staff to extend this to help children become more aware of the important skills they develop from these learning activities in and out of school.

In the nursery, most children are making appropriate progress in developing their early literacy skills. This includes selecting books from the library and exploring early writing skills. Children are keen to express themselves and they respond well to encouragement from staff. However, for a few, there is need to build their confidence and skills in listening and talking. At the primary stages, children are making good progress in their reading and writing. Most are articulate and effective contributors who listen well to each other. However, a few children need support to learn skills in taking turns and keeping on task. Across the primary stages, children read regularly in class. By P7, children can talk with confidence about books they have read and their favourite genres and authors. Children are also eager to talk about books and eBooks they are reading at home. Children have interesting opportunities to write for a range of purposes, usually linked to the current theme of their class. For example at P6, they regularly wrote detailed science reports following experiments as part of learning about sustainability in Africa. We have discussed with staff the need for all children to have better planned opportunities to practise and build on writing skills to ensure a consistently high quality of work across the school. Overall, most children are making good progress with mathematics and numeracy work but this progress is not of a consistently high quality. At early level, most children are developing a sound understanding of number but this achievement is not sustained as children move through the middle stages. From P5 to P7, children can count quickly and accurately. By P7, children can draw a range of graphs from given data and work well with each other solving mathematical problems. They need more practice carrying out surveys and using ICT to draw graphs. Children across the school are able to discuss their learning in relation to pursuing an active lifestyle and the school has a strong focus on physical education and sport. Children achieve well through participating in a wide range of activities in and out of school including running, netball, table tennis and badminton. Children were less confident describing their learning around other aspects of health and wellbeing.

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

Across the primary stages and in the nursery class, staff provide a very, warm and welcoming learning environment. In the nursery, staff support children to develop and learn well. They plan a range of relevant and interesting activities. However, in doing so, they need to take more account of children's individual interests and talents. A few children need more support and we have talked with staff about ensuring the needs of all children are met appropriately. In the primary classes, teachers and support staff work together flexibly to respond to children's needs. Tasks and activities in most lessons are suitably challenging to meet the needs of most children. Staff have access to a range of high quality resources to support learning. At times, in a few classes, the pace can be too slow. Staff should now ensure that higher-attaining children are appropriately challenged and that the pace of learning is appropriate across all stages and all areas of the curriculum. Where children need extra help with their learning, staff ensure appropriate planning is in place to support their progress.

Support staff ensure valuable assistance is given to children where appropriate. The school has effective approaches to working in partnership with other agencies to support children, including educational psychologists and autism outreach services. The Hazlehead Additional Support Need base and enhanced provision class are under review. The school and Aberdeen City Council recognise that current arrangements do not best meet the needs of all children.

Staff work well together to offer children a range of interesting curricular activities. They ensure children have regular opportunities to develop skills in literacy, numeracy, and physical education. The school's work in science has achieved a Primary Science Quality Mark Gold. Nursery children benefit from meaningful opportunities to learn outdoors. These include activities to develop literacy, numeracy and music in the freely accessed outdoor area. Staff across the nursery and primary stages are working with confidence using Curriculum for Excellence in their planning. They have developed a clear rationale for the whole curriculum and staff are creative in linking learning across different areas. For example, children in early stages built on their knowledge of healthy snacks learned through the regular 'Fruity Friday' to learn about and illustrate food groups on a healthy eating plate. In senior classes, children practised letter writing in the context of World War One, and also worked with a choreographer to create an emotive dance based on life in the trenches. However, the school's curriculum guidance is not consistently applied by all staff and there is a need to ensure progression, depth and challenge in children's learning across all areas of the curriculum. Children would benefit from more regular opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in music and drama. There are effective arrangements in place for when children move from nursery into P1. This includes older children acting as buddies in the nursery and at lunchtimes. The school has very strong links with Hazlehead Academy and its ASG. The schools work effectively as partners in curriculum development and in ensuring children build on their learning when they move on from Hazlehead School.

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

The headteacher is a strong and effective leader who is well respected by children, parents and staff. She is supported effectively by the depute headteachers and staff, and together they know the strengths and development needs of the school well. There have been significant changes in staffing in recent years and now staff are increasingly working as a team in their work to improve children's experiences. They are very appreciative of the high-quality professional learning activities within the school and the ASG. These activities are now having an impact on children's learning in most classes. Almost all staff take on leadership roles to support improvement across the school, including leading curricular developments and approaches to learning and teaching. Views of parents and children are sought through questionnaires and after school events. Overall, most parents are very happy with the work of the school. The management team observe lessons and give staff helpful feedback on their work. They track children's progress in reading, writing and mathematics and use information gathered to take steps to improve children's experiences. This now needs to be extended to other areas of the curriculum, including supporting staff who need help to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. We have asked staff to continue to strengthen their approaches to evaluating and improving children's experiences and achievements.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the nursery had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Happy, well-behaved, confident children who are very proud of their school.
- The very high-quality environment which enhances children's learning and social opportunities in and out of doors.
- The range of interesting and creative learning experiences across the school.
- Effective partnerships with parents, and in particular the local ASG.
- Strong team work across the school led by the effective headteacher.

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

- Continue to improve the delivery of the curriculum to ensure children make suitable progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Review arrangements to better meet the needs of all children.

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 evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We shall work with the school and Aberdeen City Council to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Susan Duff
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/HazleheadSchoolAberdeenCity.asp>

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