

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24 SEPTEMBER 2014

REPORT ON: EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMle) INSPECTION OF BLACKNESS PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 355-2014

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of Education Scotland (HMle) following an inspection at Blackness Primary School.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:
- i) notes the contents of this report; and
 - ii) instructs the Director of Education to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement contained in the report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 Blackness Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland (HMle) in May 2014. They published a report on their findings on 26 August 2014. At the time of the inspection 317 children were on the primary school roll.
- 4.2 The inspectors identified the following strengths of the school:
- Polite, well behaved children who are keen, eager to learn and proud of their school.
 - Strong, effective support for children with English as an additional language.
 - Strong links with a range of partners focused clearly on improving children's learning.
 - The very effective Head Teacher who has fostered strong productive relationships with the school community.
- 4.3 The following areas for improvement were agreed with the school and education authority:
- Continue to improve the curriculum in line with national guidance.
 - Continue to develop approaches to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for children.
 - Increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge for all learners.

4.4 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 Education Scotland (HMIe) reports using a six-point scale for reporting performance:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate/satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

4.4.2 The following quality evaluations were given at this inspection:

Quality Indicator	Primary School	Nursery Class
Improvements in performance	Good	N/A
Learners' experiences	Good	N/A
Meeting learning needs	Good	N/A
	For both the school (and nursery class)	
The curriculum	Good	
Improvement through self-evaluation	Good	

4.5 Blackness Primary School's *School Improvement Plan (2012-2015)* already includes a focus on the identified areas for improvement. These will be regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated in line with both the school and the local authority's quality improvement calendars. The attached appendix gives an analysis of the report and outlines improvements made to date.

4.6 HMI indicated that they are satisfied with the overall quality of provision at Blackness Primary and are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, they will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Dundee City Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

MICHAEL WOOD
Director of Education

September 2014

Dundee City Council
Education Department
Scrutiny Committee Report Summary Notes

Inspection and Reporting

Inspection Agency	HMIe
Report Publication Date	26 August 2014

Name of Establishment	Blackness Primary
Sector	Primary
Name of Head Teacher	Gordon Ferrier
Roll	328

Inspection Outcomes

Quality Indicator	Primary	Nursery	Secondary
1.1 Improvements in Performance	Good		
2.1 Learners' Experiences	Good		
5.1 Meeting Learning Needs	Good		
5.1 The Curriculum	Good		
5.9 Improvement Through Self-Evaluation	Good		

The report uses the following word scale:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Key Strengths

Strong, effective support for children with English as an additional language.
Strong links with a range of partners focused clearly on improving children's learning.
The very effective Head Teacher who has fostered strong productive relationships with the school community.

Areas for Improvement and Action

Continue to improve the curriculum in line with national guidance.
Continue to develop approaches to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for children.
Increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge for all learners.

Analysis of Report

The report accurately reflects the school's position at present and matches well to the school's own self evaluation prior to the inspection. It is also consistent with the outcomes of the school's Extended Review by the Education Department in 2012, given that revised and increased expectations for QIs on the Curriculum, 5.1 and Self Evaluation, 5.9 were published by HMLe in June 2013.

The School Improvement Plan 2012/15 reflects the areas for improvement and action and provides a clear strategic focus for school improvement.

The school provides very good support for children with English as an Additional Language and the children are making good progress across the curriculum and this has been evidenced by tracking mechanisms that allow the tracking of progress. Systematic analysis of PIPs and InCAS baseline assessments in conjunction with teachers' continuous assessment, identify key strengths and next steps in learning. The pupils are starting to record their targets in their review and planner books and the school is now building on this work to involve children further in identifying their strengths and agreeing and planning their next steps in learning.

Development of reading is a strength in the school and children are making a strong start in writing at the early stages. The school has plans to further develop this throughout the school.

Staff have attended cooperative learning training and this is now clearly evident in the delivery of learning experiences across the school.

Meeting Learning Needs is a focus across the school and all teachers understand their responsibility for meeting the needs of all learners.

The school has a very welcoming and inclusive ethos which was recognised in the report.

The pace of learning is good and there is challenge provided. The school is aware of the need to keep ensuring that the pace and challenge for all pupils is appropriate.

The curriculum is developing well and through this process, the Head Teacher and the staff have already started to implement some of the developments shared with HMLe.

There is strong and effective leadership in the school, with the Head Teacher leading the Senior Leadership Team and the staff well.

Signed



Director of Education

Signed



Head of Education



26 August 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Blackness Primary School
Dundee 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 transitions and partnerships. 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 are proud of their school and eager to learn. At all stages, they show respect for each other and celebrate their achievements together. They work well together, for example in cooperative learning groups when making posters about different world religions. Across the school, there is a real sense of community. Children are responding positively to the recognition given to their successes recorded on wall displays and at assemblies. They appreciate the opportunities they have to receive 'Red Letter Awards'. Children are starting to record their targets in their review and planner books which are helpfully shared with parents. The school now needs to build on this work to involve children further in identifying their strengths and agreeing and planning their next steps in learning. Children value the opportunities they have to be involved in the life of the school. They take on a variety of roles, including buddies, and membership of the eco committee, pupil council and health committee. This is helping them to develop their leadership skills. Many children are developing important life skills. For example, children in P1 and P6 helped to lead and deliver a successful Commonwealth Games Event for children starting P1 in August.

Children are making good progress in English language and mathematics. From the early stages, they have opportunities to work together in pairs and groups and, as a result, they listen well and talk confidently to each other. Across the school, children are making good progress in their reading. They talk enthusiastically and confidently about the texts they have read. At the upper stages, 'Reading Rings' and 'Reading Detectives' promote children's capacity to read a variety of texts for enjoyment, and share their opinions of texts and writers' style to feedback to their class. Children at the early stages are making a very strong start in writing. New approaches are enhancing children's vocabulary in their writing. As children move through the school

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Transforming lives through learning

they have opportunities to apply their writing skills in different contexts including contributing their own features for the popular pupil newsletter, 'Blackness Buzz'. Staff now need to ensure children know how to improve their writing. In mathematics, most children across the school are confident in their mental and written calculations. The whole-school focus on mental maths has had a positive impact on children's mental agility. Staff need to continue to build upon these achievements, so that children's attainment in all aspects of mathematics continues to improve. Children would benefit from opportunities to apply their numeracy skills to real life contexts. The highly visible work of the eco group throughout the school has raised children's awareness of environmental issues. Children talk knowledgeably about their playground garden and wildlife habitats and understand the damage litter can do to wildlife. Across the school, children's skills in information and communications technology are developing well. For example at P6, children use tablets very effectively to extend their learning about vertebrates. Children's art work throughout the school is of a very high standard.

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

The school has a very welcoming and inclusive ethos. Overall, most lessons are set at the right level of challenge for children. However, in a few classes, children would benefit from a brisker pace of learning. We have asked the school to ensure learning is suitably challenging for all children, including the highest-achieving children. Staff provide appropriate targeted support to children with identified additional support needs. Very good support is provided to children who have English as an additional language (EAL). Children and staff benefit greatly from the support and guidance provided by the Bilingual Pupil Support Teacher. With support from a broad range of professionals, staff support children well to develop their understanding of wellbeing. There is a clear programme in place to develop children's awareness of keeping safe and healthy, for example, 'Safetaysiders' which helps develop children's awareness of risk and provides them with strategies to keep themselves safe. The headteacher has a clear vision on the purpose of the curriculum and has shared this effectively with staff. Staff are working well together to develop programmes in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Partners such as specialist tennis coaches support the delivery of the school's very good physical education programme. Staff now need to continue to develop the curriculum as planned, and ensure children's knowledge and skills are developed progressively as they move through the school. Children would benefit from more relevant contexts for learning which take account of the school's very interesting local area. There are good arrangements in place to ensure a smooth transition for children as they start in P1 and move between stages and on to S1. The school is working hard to extend and improve further its curricular links with Harris Academy.

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

The school has a clear and strategic improvement plan in place which is helping to achieve significant improvements. Recent significant developments have helped to improve children's mental maths skills, writing at the early stages and spelling. The headteacher is highly focused on improving outcomes for children. He has fostered respectful relationships with the whole school community. He is an effective leader who knows the strengths and development needs of the school well. He has cultivated a climate of trust, where staff are confident about their roles and responsibilities.

He has provided the depute and acting principal teacher with opportunities to develop their respective skills. They work very effectively as a senior leadership team. Staff are becoming increasingly reflective practitioners, but would benefit from more opportunities to share good practice within the school and with colleagues across the cluster. This will help to ensure more consistently high quality learning experiences for all children. Staff are fully committed to developing the curriculum and improving learning and teaching, and morale is high.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Polite, well behaved children who are keen, eager to learn and proud of their school.
- Strong, effective support for children with English as an additional language.
- Strong links with a range of partners focused clearly on improving children's learning.
- The very effective headteacher who has fostered strong productive relationships with the school community.

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

- Continue to improve the curriculum in line with national guidance.
- Continue to develop approaches to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for children.
- Increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge for all learners.

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. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Dundee City Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Jackie Maley
HM 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/primsec/BlacknessPrimarySchoolDundeeCity.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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