



From mountain to sea

Education & Children's Services

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Interim Report **TOWIE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Introduction**

Towie School was inspected at the end of January 2022, with the report being published in May 2022. Since the visit in January 2022 there have been changes to the staff profile at the school. The Head Teacher left in August 2022 for family reasons and an Acting Head Teacher was recruited as interim measure to allow recruitment to the permanent post. The Acting Head Teacher is an experienced Head Teacher, with detailed knowledge and understanding of the Scottish Curriculum and was able to respond to the areas for development highlighted in the report and subsequent improvement plan. Shortly after the start of session the long-serving support staff also left education, and most recently one of the job share teachers in the P1-4 class also left the primary sector to work in Early Years. The staff who have joined the school are committed and enthusiastic about their new positions. They have settled well into the school and been able to contribute to the improvement agenda.

There have been two progress visits to the school by Aberdeenshire Officers to the school during the current session to review and evaluate progress against the areas for development highlighted at the visit in January 2022.

<b>Key Priorities identified at visit in January 2022</b>	<b>Progress statement</b>
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***Staff should now take an active role in leading improvements in key areas, such as curriculum development.***

Staff have prioritised the review of Interdisciplinary Learning planning to ensure planning takes appropriate account of the Experiences and Outcomes. The planning for IDL also incorporates the recently adopted Skills framework. Pupils also report that they are now routinely asked about what they would like to learn within a topic and the IDL planners incorporate space to record information from KWL discussions with pupils to ensure that it is taken account of by teachers. A review of this approach at the most recent QA / QI visit identified that next steps would be to stream line the selection of Es and Os to sure learning is focussed and specific.

***Staff should now provide leadership opportunities for more children and support them to identify the skills and attributes they are developing as a result of their leadership roles.***

A skill tracker was identified at the start of session and has been used initially with the P5-7 class, with children using the tracker once a term to reflect on skills development in context. As staff confidence in the use of this tracker has developed there has been professional discussion about how to adapt for effective use with the P1-4 class. This will be extended into practice by the end of Term 4 this session for the lower class. The trackers allow children to reflect on the skills they are developing through opportunities in a variety of contexts from the classroom, to

leadership groups, whole school responsibilities and opportunities outwith school. At the first QA / QI visit guidance was given about embedding the language of skills development into daily practice within the classroom. At the follow up visit the children were able to talk about how skills were referred to in class and how the skills trackers supported them to reflect on which skills they were developing.

Since the visit in January 2022 the approach to leadership groups in the school has changed. All pupils are now involved in a leadership groups and appropriate time is allocated to the leadership groups each week allowing for pupils to progress their identified priorities and to feedback to the rest of the school. Action plans for each group are now in place. There is an opportunity for pupils to rotate through the leadership groups on a monthly basis. The three leadership groups are Eco, Rights Respecting and Pupil Council, with learners able to talk confidently about the work their groups were doing and the difference they were making to school life. There are also leadership opportunities within classrooms and through the whole school activities with other cluster schools and intergenerational community events. In addition, the Young Leader Programme has been developed this session in collaboration with Active Schools. The pupils are very positive about the impact this has had in the playground and were also able to articulate the skills they had developed through this opportunity. Parent Pupil opportunities such as the Gardening Group also provide opportunity for skills development and leadership, as does the development of the library.

***The headteacher should now involve parents in other aspects of school improvement***

The parent council continues to be involved in the development of outside spaces. Parents have been kept informed of the changes to nurture provision to meet wellbeing needs and are very pleased with the changes that have been made as they notice a reduction in attendance anxiety among their children and can see that children are being equipped with the tools to resolve issues between peers. They report that children are more enthusiastic about learning and much less stressed. On an individual level parents report that they now feel more comfortable approaching the HT when they have a concern and they are involved in planning approaches to support their child. As work on curriculum development picks up pace, they should continue to be involved in this. There has been initial involvement of parents in the form of a questionnaire around developing the young workforce and skills. Parents are aware that there is much more outdoor learning and feel more involved in developments due to improved open communication.

The Acting Head Teacher has also involved parents in the creation of the Teaching and Learning Statement required to be in place in all Aberdeenshire Schools by the end of session with their feedback having been incorporated into the developing statement.

***Teachers now need to be more fully involved in analysing this information to highlight areas of strength and identify development needs.***

Progress has been made in this area with whole school and individual data discussions taking place. Literacy, numeracy and Health and Wellbeing are being tracked regularly. Planning is becoming more responsive with pupils moving between classes for writing.

Detailed notes on planned interventions are kept and these are also being reviewed for impact. At the QA/QI visit it was identified that there is further scope for more flexible approaches to pupil groupings between classes to meet learning needs, providing appropriate support and challenge, and also to consider how adults are being used to support and extend learning.

***The headteacher should continue with plans to track children's progress in all areas of the curriculum.***

At the QA / QI visit it was clear that planning in other curricular areas needs to be developed more before approaching further tracking in other curricular areas. Skills tracking that has started is being extended to early stages classes. The Acting Head Teacher is aware of the

need to continue to ensure that information from tracking is used to identify next steps as appropriate.

Tracking of progress within literacy and numeracy is clearly defined but there is scope to work more towards promoting of challenge as well as support at the planning stage.

***Staff should now consider how to help younger children develop their understanding of wellbeing further.***

Progress has been made within this area with Zones of Regulation being used in class to support identification of feelings and corresponding tools and strategies.

Health and Wellbeing lessons are addressing this effectively with resources such as *Bounceback* and the Coram Scarf curriculum having been identified to support. Staff are being responsive to ongoing experiences within classroom.

Wellbeing webs are being completed with children on a termly basis in class, with staff considering what Wellbeing Webs are showing and also reacting to this information to support pupils appropriately.

***The headteacher and staff should track the skills that are being developed through participation in clubs and activities and support children to recognise these skills.***

There has been progress in this area. The skills framework that has been identified and adopted is now being used with children during pupil groups to extend knowledge of how skills are developed in every aspect of school life. As children are encouraged to share out of school achievements the celebration of these in school should focus on what skills have been developed.

***Ensure all children have more regular opportunities to write at length and improve the presentation of their work.***

From jotter scrutiny undertaken during QA / QI visits this session there is evidence of extended writing across different genres. In both the P1-4 and the P5-7 class there is evidence of differentiation. There are opportunities for self and peer assessment based on use of success criteria. Collaborative working with schools in the Upper Donside Mini Cluster is supporting understating of standards. A next step will be to promote higher expectations for pupils in relation to presentation of work.

***Staff at the primary stages now need to develop consistent approaches to planning, learning and assessment across all curriculum areas.***

Approaches to planning have been reviewed to ensure that planning is grounded in the Experiences and Outcomes, builds on prior learning and that assessment is planned for. Given recent changes to staffing in classes these new approaches continue to be embedded by staff. The starting point was planning for IDL, however, staff are now ready to extend this practice to other areas of curriculum.

***Staff at the primary stages recognise that developing the curriculum continues to be an improvement priority***

There has been a focus this session on re-establishing appropriate community partnerships which strengthen learning contexts and the curriculum. New approaches to planning for IDL are also supporting this work as teachers in conversation with learners develop learning contexts which are relevant and motivational for children. Children and staff talk positively about the opportunities to work with other schools for cultural activities such as St. Andrews Day and Sports Day; the recent TechFest at a neighbouring school and a new joint mountain biking initiative with another neighbouring school. Collaborative working within the mini cluster is supporting the development of curricular opportunities. The Acting Head Teacher has identified grants to support access and equity of opportunity for all learners in this rural setting. In addition,

there has been a continued focus on re-establishing and developing Forest School practice and there are numerous opportunities for intergenerational learning through links with the local Church and Silver Circle group.

### **Next Steps**

- Develop the skills tracker to incorporate the Meta Skills framework which will further support the identification of skills being developed across the curriculum.
- Continue to refine planning for IDL to ensure that the selection of Es and Os is focussed.
- Extend tracking of attainment against Es and Os and Benchmarks to all areas of the curriculum.
- Ensure that planning for assessment is a central part of planning for all learning and teaching.
- Continue to develop community partnerships with a joint exploration of how learning activities are contributing to the Developing the Young Workforce initiatives.
- Maintain focus on high standards and expectations for all in relation to written work and presentation.
- Continue to consult appropriately with parents as the curriculum further develops.

Report prepared by



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