
To: Education and Children's Policy Board

On: 10 March 2016

Report by: Director of Children's Services

**Heading: Education Scotland Inspection of Thorn Primary School,
Johnstone**

1. Summary

- 1.1. Thorn Primary School in Johnstone, was inspected by Education Scotland, in October 2015, as part of a national sample of primary education. The letter to parents and quality indicator evaluations, published by Education Scotland on 19 January 2016 are attached as appendices to this report. The letter to parents is also available from the director of children's services or from the Education Scotland website www.educationscotland.gov.uk
- 1.2. The purpose of the school inspection was to evaluate the quality of education. Inspectors assessed the school, with a focus on five quality indicators which were: improvements in performance; the quality of learners' experiences; meeting learning needs; the curriculum; and improvement through self-evaluation.
- 1.3. This was a positive inspection by Education Scotland and the letter to parents identified four key strengths of the school. These were:
 - Confident, articulate children who are happy at school and eager to learn
 - The nurturing and inclusive ethos of the school community
 - The effective leadership of the head teacher in taking forward school improvement
 - The teamwork and enthusiasm of staff and their commitment to improving
- 1.4. The report identified three areas for further improvement. These were:
 - Continue to improve approaches to assessing and tracking children's progress to improve attainment
 - Develop further children's ability to know what they do well and what they need to do to improve

- Build on the approaches to meeting children's learning needs to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged in their learning.
- 1.5. Children's services has an agreed set of procedures for responding to inspection reports. The school and the service will prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the points for action in the report, and share this plan with parents. In addition, the school will be supported in its improvement by children's services. Within two years of the publication of the letter to parents children's services will inform parents of the progress made by the school in addressing the main points for action.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members of the education and children policy board are asked to note the key strengths and the areas for improvement in the Education Scotland report on Thorn Primary School.
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3. Background

- 3.1. Education Scotland reports are circulated to the local elected members, staff, parent council members and are made available on-line to the wider parent body. Copies are also sent to local and central libraries.
- 3.2. The report includes three recommendations for improvement. These recommendations will be addressed through an action plan, produced by the school and supported by children's services staff.
- 3.3. Progress on the action plan will be monitored by children's services staff on a proportionate basis. A report will be prepared within two years of the original inspection, detailing the progress made in implementing the action plan. This report will be made available to parents.
- 3.4. Children's services welcomes the process of audit undertaken by Education Scotland as supportive to continuous improvement in Renfrewshire schools. The inspection report will be used by the school and the service in the context of supporting and developing the quality of educational provision.
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Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

None.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

None.

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Children and Young People

- High standards of education provision ensure that children and young people are given the best start in life so that they promote and contribute to a more prosperous, fairer society.

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| Community Care, Health and Well-being | - By providing an environment which encourages care, welfare and development, establishments play a crucial role in developing children and young people so that they become responsible citizens. The school and nursery's success in promoting healthy lifestyles is evaluated as part of the quality assurance process. |
| Empowering our Communities | - High standards of education provision ensure that children and young people are given the best start in life so that they promote and contribute to a more prosperous, fairer society. |
| Greener | - Participation in the eco-schools programme encourages young people to become environmentally aware. |
| Jobs and the Economy | - The quality assurance process contributes to our young people becoming successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. |

4. Legal Implications

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000.

5. Property/Assets Implications

None.

6. Information Technology Implications

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only.

8. Health and Safety Implications

None.

9. Procurement Implications

None.

10. Risk Implications

None.

11. Privacy Impact

None.

List of Background Papers

(a) None.

Children's Services

TMcE

2 February 2016

Author: Tony McEwan, Education Manager (planning and performance),
telephone no: 0141 618 7198

19th January 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Thorn Primary School
Renfrewshire 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 reading in the upper stages and the work of the school on developing approaches to numeracy and mathematics. 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?

Overall, children learn and achieve well in Thorn Primary School. Across the school, children are happy and eager to learn. They are confident, articulate and keen to talk about their learning and achievements. Children work well together in groups, pairs and as individuals. In most lessons, children have meaningful opportunities to discuss their learning and reflect upon the progress they are making. We have asked the school to continue to improve children's awareness of their progress as learners by helping them to understand what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Children could be involved more regularly in setting targets that help them to move forward in their learning.

Children's experiences are enriched through a wide range of opportunities to learn and achieve beyond the classroom. Most children play an active part in school life. They contribute to the school community through pupil voice committees such as the pupil council and Rights Respecting Schools group. As they progress through the school, children are developing confidence and leadership skills through their roles as house captains, primary 1 buddies, peer mediators and learning buddies. High numbers of children participate in motivating sporting activities and clubs organised in partnership with Active Schools. They are developing new skills and recognise the benefits to their own health and wellbeing by taking part in sports and being physically active. Children are also gaining confidence through performances at assemblies, as part of the school choir and at the Christmas concert. This year, children in primary 7 are participating in the *Divided City* drama performance with the Citizen's Theatre in collaboration with another school. The school recognises and celebrates these achievements well. We have asked staff to make children more aware of the skills and qualities they are gaining as a result of these valuable experiences.

Overall, children are making good progress in their learning in literacy and numeracy. The school's approaches to reading are improving children's ability to read fluently with understanding as they progress through the school. Most children talk enthusiastically about the books they have read. At all stages, children write regularly for a range of purposes and receive helpful and focused feedback on their writing. This is helping them to improve. They can apply their literacy skills in different areas of their learning. For example, primary 6/5 use their reading skills confidently to find information, distinguish between fact and opinion and make notes for their knights and castles topic. We have asked the school to continue to raise attainment in literacy, particularly in writing. Across the school, children are developing confidence, fluency and accuracy in mental calculations. New learning and teaching approaches to numeracy and mathematics are having a positive impact on children's engagement and enjoyment. Children are developing a good understanding of number, money and measurement appropriate to their stage. Children in primary 6 can successfully apply their numeracy skills when working out profit and loss in a problem-solving activity. They are also developing financial management skills through running the Credit Union. We have asked the school to provide more opportunities like these for children to apply their numeracy skills in real-life contexts and to solve mathematical problems. There is scope to increase the pace of learning in numeracy and mathematics for higher achieving children to ensure the highest possible attainment. Children can confidently discuss their learning in health and wellbeing. Across the school, children understand the importance of healthy food choices to good health and the importance of wellbeing, friendships and positive relationships. This is supporting them to make positive choices.

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

The school provides a nurturing and inclusive ethos which is supporting children to develop and learn well. Almost all children say that they feel safe and well cared for in school. They benefit from very positive relationships with staff. All staff work well together to support children in their learning. Children also support each other well. For most of the time, children are appropriately challenged by the learning planned for them. In some lessons, there is scope to provide more challenging work and a brisker pace of learning. The needs of children who require additional support are met very well. The school works well with parents and partner agencies to put appropriate plans in place that ensure children are well supported and make suitable progress in their learning.

At all stages, children are offered a broad and balanced range of learning experiences in line with Curriculum for Excellence guidance. The school is continuing to improve its curriculum. The on-going work reviewing and developing areas of the curriculum, such as reading, writing, science and physical education, is resulting in improved experiences and outcomes for children. The school now needs to continue to develop other areas of the curriculum as planned. Children have good opportunities to take their learning outdoors. For example, children in the early stages make good use of the garden, making their own compost, growing vegetables for their harvest topic and using them to make soup. There has been a strong focus across the school on developing children's learning about sustainability and global citizenship. Every class has responsibility for an aspect of the school's eco work. Children enjoyed activities such as creating a bug hotel and building shelters for hibernating hedgehogs during the school's annual eco day of action. Children are well supported as they move from

nursery to primary 1. We have asked the school to continue its focus on literacy and numeracy as it evaluates and improves the curriculum further.

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

The headteacher provides effective leadership for the school and its children. She is very well respected across the community and by staff and pupils. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and together they provide clear direction for the school. Staff work very well together as a team. They are highly committed to improving the work of the school. They are keen to take on leadership roles and professional learning opportunities to improve their practice. Teachers are open to new ideas and share practice with each other and with colleagues in other local schools. The headteacher has put in place a range of effective approaches to evaluate the work of the school. The priorities identified through these self-evaluation processes have enabled the school to focus its work and this is impacting positively on children's experiences. The views of children and parents are sought through questionnaires and meetings. There is scope for them to have an even greater role in improving the work of the school. The school is developing approaches to assessing and tracking children's progress in literacy and numeracy. We have discussed with the school ways in which it can develop this further to raise attainment and ensure all children make appropriate progress. The headteacher and staff are well placed to ensure the school continues to improve.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident, articulate children who are happy at school and eager to learn
- The nurturing and inclusive ethos of the school community.
- The effective leadership of the headteacher in taking forward school improvement
- The teamwork and enthusiasm of staff and their commitment to improving children's experiences

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

- Continue to improve approaches to assessing and tracking the children's progress to improve attainment
- Develop further children's ability to know what they do well and what they need to do to improve
- Build on the approaches to meeting children's learning needs to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged in their learning

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, Renfrewshire Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Mary Byrne

HM Inspector

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the publication *How good is our school?*¹. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools are doing.

Here are the evaluations for **Thorn Primary School**.

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| Improvements in performance | good |
| Learners' experiences | good |
| Meeting learning needs | good |

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

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| The curriculum | good |
| Improvement through self-evaluation | good |

A copy of the full letter is available on the Education Scotland website at

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