

1 April 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**St John's RC Academy and Nursery Class
Perth and Kinross Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents, children and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children and young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children and young people 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 how well the school supports progression in young people's learning at times of transition, teachers' use of tracking and monitoring of young people's progress, and the school's partnerships with the wider community. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's and young people's education.

How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Across the nursery, primary and secondary stages, children and young people are polite, welcoming and well-behaved. Almost all feel safe and well cared for by staff across the campus. At all stages, positive relationships and high expectations are a strong feature of learning, and to which children and young people respond well. Children and young people enjoy the many opportunities to work in pairs and groups in classes and during out-of-class activities. In the nursery classes, children are developing independence through serving their own snacks, tidying up and getting ready to go outside. We have asked staff to include the children more in planning learning that promotes curiosity and encourages early problem-solving skills, including through increased engagement with the local community. Across the primary and secondary stages, almost all young people feel that school is helping them to become more confident. As a result of well-focused learning conversations with class teachers and tutors, most young people are aware of their progress and skills across the curriculum and know how to improve. Staff now need to ensure this happens consistently for every class across the school.

Young people have a strong voice in the school through the various councils and committees which contribute to school improvement. There is scope to include the nursery classes more fully in these and other whole-school projects. Children and young people are improving their health and wellbeing through the wide range of cultural and sports activities through which many achieve awards. Many young people confidently lead activities which support their peers and others in the local community to achieve. They are developing important skills for learning, work and life. For

example, the Sports Ambassadors are increasing awareness of health and wellbeing across the campus. Those involved in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative are developing enterprise skills which enable them to support local and national charities. As a result of the strong Catholic ethos within the school, children and young people have a sense of responsibility to others which is demonstrated through their significant fundraising and volunteering activities. Working with community learning and development staff, the school supports young people to build helpful profiles of their achievements in school and in the wider community.

The development of the all-through school within the community campus has meant a period of significant change for the whole school community. Throughout this period, children's and young people's achievements have continually improved. There have been significant improvements in young people's performance in national examinations from S4 to S6. Children and young people demonstrate good listening and talking skills and apply them in all areas of their learning. In the nursery, for example, children described how they grew potatoes and used them to make mash. Others could talk about different shapes and compare objects by size and weight. They enjoy story books and use non-fiction texts to follow their interests, for example, by looking up recipes in the home corner. At the primary and secondary stages, most young people can make their own notes from texts and presentations and use them well to write for a range of purposes across the curriculum. They often apply their literacy skills in challenging real-life contexts such as the mock court case which children in P7 found particularly motivating. Staff recognise the need to improve young people's mathematics skills across the primary stages. From S1 to S3, young people build very well on their previous learning and achievements. Most are making very good progress. From S4 to S6, the school consistently performs very well in national examinations. Children and young people who are learning English as an additional language achieve well in the school. Almost all young people secure a positive post-school destination.

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

Staff provide strong pastoral care and support for the children and young people. Staff work well with a range of partner agencies who contribute effectively to children's and young people's development. Staff and partners provide good support which enables children and young people with additional support needs to progress in their learning. Good examples of this include the school's partnership with a local Polish school and support for learners with dyslexia. Staff working in the nurture room provide a calm, supportive environment which is helping children feel more confident and secure in the school. Better teamwork across the pupil support team and recent developments in tracking and monitoring are giving staff a fuller understanding of children's and young people's strengths and learning needs. In almost all classes, staff respond to individual children and young people by adapting activities and dialogue during play sessions and lessons. Staff need to improve how they plan learning to meet the differing needs of their pupils. There is scope to use questioning better to ensure all children and young people are appropriately challenged. A strong programme of peer mentoring in mathematics supports young people to increase their skills through one-to-one support from students in S1 to S6.

From nursery to S3, the curriculum provides children and young people with a broad range of learning experiences which promote enjoyment and allow them to follow their own interests. The school makes effective use of the 3-18 campus to increase opportunities for children and young people by sharing staff and pupil expertise across the different stages. Parents and other visitors support and extend children's learning in the nursery and primary classes, for example through sharing stories of the past or about the jobs they do in the community. Children benefit from the high-quality campus learning facilities including the community library and the dance studio. Children transferring from nursery to P1 benefit from the shared play experiences and joint working of staff at these stages. We have asked the school to strengthen this work as staff further develop their understanding of the early level of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the primary and secondary stages, teachers provide good opportunities for children and young people to work on projects which link different subject areas together. Young people often find this learning relevant and engaging. Staff should continue to improve how they ensure progression in learning across the different curriculum areas. Secondary teachers deliver drama, a modern language, physical education, design and technology, music and art to some primary classes. This is extending young people's knowledge and skills in these areas and supports them well in the move from P7 to S1. Young people in S3 deepen their learning and specialise in a number of chosen areas through master classes. From S4 to S6, young people follow curriculum pathways which suit their needs and abilities. Through the tutor group programme, young people access high levels of personal support from staff who know them well. Successful partnerships with employers and other learning providers are supporting the school to provide a growing range of experiences which enhance young people's skills for learning, work and life. Children and young people benefit greatly from the many wider curriculum activities run by staff and through the Sports Comprehensive run with a neighbouring school. Young people benefit from the increased opportunities for learning and achievement as a result of the Perth City Campus which enables them to study for qualifications available at other schools in the city.

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

The school is a strong community of faith. Effective partnerships with the local parishes and diocesan staff support the school well to celebrate and further develop its Catholic ethos. The community campus is a lively hub of successful learning for the children, young people and adults of the local community and from across Perth and Kinross. The headteacher provides strong leadership and direction to the school. She demonstrates significant skills in the management of people and resources to achieve the best outcomes for all learners. She is ably supported by the team of deputies all of whom demonstrate leadership in their roles. All staff are reflective and keen to give their best to the children and young people. They work well in teams across the various stages and with partners to evaluate their work and set priorities which are supporting the school well to continue to improve. Staff at all levels value the views of children, young people, parents and other partners. The school is aware of the need to continue reviewing and improving communication with parents. Children's and young people's learning is enhanced as a result of the regular engagement of staff in professional learning to extend their skills and expertise.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Children's and young people's behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- High-quality care and welfare reflected in caring, respectful relationships across the school.
- Wide-ranging partnerships which enhance pupils' learning and achievement.
- Young people's attainment in the senior phase.
- Self-evaluation and leadership at all levels which is leading to continuous school improvement.
- The headteacher's effective leadership of improvement and change.

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

- Improve approaches to planning progression in children's and young people's skills across all areas of the curriculum.
- Improve the curriculum in the nursery through increased outdoor learning and learning in the local community.
- Ensure consistently high-quality learning and teaching that meets young people's varying needs and abilities.

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 aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further. We will work with the school and Perth and Kinross Council in order to record the innovative practice and share it more widely.

Patricia Watson
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/StJohnsRCAcademyPerth.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.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.