SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EDUCATION PERFORMANCE (HMie) SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION PERFORMANCE (HMie) SUB-COMMITTEE held in Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells on 24 March 2014 at 9.45 a.m.

Present: - Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), B. Herd.
Apology:- Councillor F. Renton.
In Attendance:- Senior Education Officer (K. McCall), Democratic Services Officer (F. Henderson).

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EARLSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

In Attendance:- Councillor I. Gillespie, J. Torrance; Lesley Munro (Headteacher); Christine Brown (Senior Education Officer); David Gordon (Parent Council Representative).
Apologies:- Councillor D. Parker.

WELCOME
1. The Chairman welcomed the Earlston Primary School representatives to the meeting.

HMie Report
2. With reference to paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Minute of 4 June 2013, there had been circulated copies of a briefing note by the Head of Schools to consider the findings of the HMie inspection report in respect of Earlston Primary School. Also circulated was a summary of strengths and main action points and the letter issued to parents/career in December 2013. The report outlined the findings of the inspection, carried out in November 2013, in terms of the school’s particular strengths as well as the key points for action. The key strengths identified were: improvements were identified in all areas in the children’s learning experiences; a greater emphasis was being placed on active engagement in learning and building on prior learning in all classes; There was a consistent approach across all classes celebrating achievements both within and out with the school; an effective structure and framework to track and monitor progress in reading, writing and mathematics had been developed; a clear plan was in place to continue to improve the curriculum; a whole school approach had been developed to ensure children received a broad general education from nursery to P7; Class teachers were working well together to improve learning and teaching and were more reflective about their own work and had a greater understanding of their role in self evaluation for improvement.

3. The Headteacher reported that there had been stability in staffing since November 2013 and the follow through process had been very positive for staff and children who had been praised. In relation to the main points of action, the Headteacher advised that in terms of reviewing learning logs and giving the children regular opportunities to evaluate their learning and identify their next steps, Individual graphs had been developed to track each child and these would be developed throughout the school. There continued to be work undertaken on Parent Focus Groups, drop-in sessions and giving the focus groups issues to explore and get feedback on these. In terms of learning and learning logs, pupils were becoming much more confident talking about their learning and parents were encouraged to view their children’s learning log and work was being undertaken to explore how the learning logs could be used on different age groups. There was a class blog being developed through the ICT programme at the end of each week which was improving communications and ensuring that information was up to date rather than waiting for a newsletter.
4. The Parent Council representative, David Gordon, advised that the Parent Council recognised progress in a number of areas. Parents had been involved and were reviewing the Parent Council which had become a fund raising committee and now looking at the structure and how best to utilise the strengths within the Parent Council. Communication had improved and area for improvements had been identified and conveyed to the Parents. Senior Education Officer Christine Brown commented that the Headteacher had worked very hard over the year to address the main points of action and build on the identified strengths. There had been a change in the management of the School and progress was being made although there was still work to be done. It was acknowledged that there had been a lack of understanding from Teachers in respect of the purpose of the learning logs and the Headteacher advised that there was a more consistent approach but work to be done to make it more instinctive and to embed which could be pursued using Pupil Forums. The Headteacher advised that the Community Learning Board had been a huge support and Earlston worked closely in partnership with Lauder Primary School. The Chairman thanked the representatives for their attendance.

DECISION

(a) AGREED that:

(i) Earlston Primary School be commended for the hard work undertaken in achieving due recognition for its key strengths; and

(ii) ELL monitor progress on action plans in accordance with normal procedures.

(b) NOTED that the action plan in respect of Earlston Primary School would form part of the school improvement plan for 2013-14.

TWEEDBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL

In attendance:- Councillors I. Gillespie, J. Torrance; Alison Weir (Headteacher); A T Lawrie (Senior Education Officer); Lesley Stoddart (Parent Council Representative);

Apologies:- Councillor D. Parker.

WELCOME

5. The Chairman welcomed the Tweedbank Primary School representatives to the meeting.

HMie Report

6. With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 13 March 2013, there had been circulated copies of a briefing note by the Head of Schools to consider the progress made following the HMie Inspection Report in respect of Tweedbank Primary School. Also circulated were a summary of strengths and main action points and the letter issued to parents/career in September 2013, together with a summary of the Parent, Teachers and Nursery Staff questionnaire. The key strengths identified were: the nursery class children remained happy and settled; staff had worked hard to agree and put in place a whole school –behaviour system which most children were responding to positively and liked working towards a system of rewards; Teachers were much more confident in dealing with behaviour issues and this had led to a much calmer learning environment; Most teachers were giving children greater responsibility for leading learning and encouraged them to share their ideas with one another; In most lessons, children were actively engaged in their tasks and could talk confidently about what they were learning; There have been improvements in managing behaviour, planning the curriculum and providing a better environment for learning.

7. The Headteacher explained behaviour within the School had improved and there was a clear and consistent behaviour policy which had been shared with Staff and Parents and violent behaviour
had reduced. There remained high profile pupils attending the school, however these were being managed. Parents had been very supportive of the positive behaviour policy and the pupils were taking pride in their school. In terms of improving learning, the Headteacher reported that Teachers were able to focus much more on active learning. There had been more outdoor learning opportunities and the children were growing in confidence in speaking and performing during open afternoons for Parents. Work had been specifically undertaken in Physical Education and Science. There was in place more effective support for learning and a referral process. The Senior Management Team were involved in improving self evaluation amongst the pupils and team working had improved.

8. Parent representative, Lesley Stoddart advised that there had definitely been an improvement in behaviour and learning logs were available for Parents to view pupil progress.

9. The Senior Education Officer reported that the improvement in behaviour had led to an improvement in learning, and while there was some evidence of community involvement, there remained work to be done. The Senior Education Officer went on to advise that there remained gaps in the Nursery profiles and these required to be maintained and self evaluation improved and monitored. The Headteacher advised that she met with the Nursery Manager on a weekly basis and with the Nursery staff on a monthly basis. The Members of the Sub-Committee expressed concern with regard to violent incidents occurring within the school and sought information with regard to Parental involvement within the School. The Headteacher advised that there were opportunities for the Parents to come into the school with class assemblies, Open Afternoon’s and learning logs, Parents comments on reports and the leavers assembly would be re-vamped following negative comments received. The Members sought information with regard to plans for involving the Community in the School and vice versa and suggested that the Headteacher attend the Community Council meetings to learn of events which the School could become involved in. It was further suggested that Local Elected Members could be invited to attend events within the School.

DECISION
(a) AGREED:-

(i) to commend Tweedbank Primary School for the hard work undertaken in achieving due recognition for its key strengths;

(ii) that ELL would continue to monitor progress on action plans in accordance with normal procedures;

(iii) that the Headteacher continue to strengthen links with the Tweedbank Community in general; and

(iv) that ELL continue to closely monitor evidence of improvement of the Nursery learning experience and profiling.

(b) NOTED that the action plan in respect of Tweedbank Primary School would form part of the school improvement plan for 2013/14.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm