NARRATOR :

Curriculum for excellence has been introduced to raise standards of learning and teaching, and help improve children’s achievements and life chances, the most extensive consultation ever on Scottish education, involving parents, pupils, teachers, employers and others. The national debate on education in 2002 widely recognized that if Scotland’s children and young people are to gain the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for life in the 21st Century we need a forward looking, coherent curriculum that will inspire them to achieve at the highest levels.

The joined sciences project Tatties and Minibeasts involved the nursery and primary one classes at Rothes Primary School in Murray. The collaboration between nursery and primary was designed to help with the transition from Early Years to Primary. These children were given new opportunities to develop knowledge and skills, plan and evaluate their own learning, and to build confidence and self-esteem, all hugely valuable skills as they move on through their educational journey.

Motivated children who are engaged with tasks that have a clear purpose will retain more, learn more, and will be more likely to transfer the knowledge and be able to apply it to different situations. The learning experiences provided for children were appropriate, challenging, exciting, and fun. In this example, we hear from the children, the teachers, and from a parent who shares her experience of the positive impact that Curriculum for Excellence has had on their child’s experience. But most of all, we can see the enjoyment young people get from learning this way, and the pride they take in what they have accomplished.

Tatties and Minibeasts project from Rothes Primary, Moray

ROSEMARY GARRITY (Headteacher):

A child at Rothes School is looking at a different curriculum now than three years ago and they’re looking at a curriculum that meets their needs.

HEATHER REID (Teacher):

The tatties and minibeasts project has been a transition project. It was designed in that way so that the children were more comfortable to move from nursery into primary one. They would have met, interacted, and learned with some of the peers that would be their buddies the next year. It might also be in a composite class with them the following year. Also meant that the schools staff, being the primary one teacher, the primary one classroom assistant was out there working with the children.

ROSEMARY GARRITY (Headteacher):

The difference I think our children will see it that they’re looking at their own targets, they’re setting their targets, and then they’re measuring to see how they’ve achieved against them.

NATHAN:

We planted the tatties and every day we kept on going out to look at them to see if they were growing yet, and everyone had a lot of fun doing it, and some people worked together with their friends.

ANNA and GRACE :

I grew tatties in the garden.

KATIE and OWEN:

And here’s our tattie here.

KERRY and CHARLIE:

We had to dig holes then we got to put the tatties with the roots going up and then we got to put the soil down over the tatties and then when they’re ready you dig up the tatties.

LUKE and ARIELA:

We were digging the tatties out and then we all had a go of cutting them and making them into tattie soup.

MES (Parent):

They’re realizing that these things don’t happen so easily, that there has to be a maintenance project that goes along with it. And then at the end, they go in and they get to dig all the tatties up and that’s such a fun project. And the kids see what they’ve actually grown from start to end. And for example, my daughter Nina would never eat soup, and suddenly because it’s been this wonderful project, within the school, suddenly she eating soup. So it’s fabulous, it’s giving them a nutritional education as well.

KATIE and OWEN:

Cook the tatties and then we eat them. Yummy!

KERRY and CHARLIE:

I learnt that tatties should grow in gardens.

NATHAN:

We learnt that plants won’t just grow instantly, you have to wait.

ROSEMARY GARRITY (Headteacher):

Although it was a science based project, we wanted the children to learn the skills of investigation, we wanted them to have fun and enjoyment, and we wanted them to experiment and be creative, so we linked everything in together. We also linked it to a partnership with the parents as well, as the parents were actively involved in the garden. And up to date today we’ve linked it to our dinosaur project.

HEATHER REID (Teacher):

Our science has moved on to look at electricity, we made a giant model of a dinosaur for a different project, but we were able to use it to build circuits and make his eyes light up and added a talking book. So it really all interconnects, all the learning, all the skills, they interconnect and although the actual context that you’re doing the learning and the actual changes may be from minibeasts to electricity, it is the skills that we are teaching the children that are really important.

NATHAN:

We’re using bulbs, batteries, crocodile clips, buzzes, and motors.

HEATHER REID (Teacher):

We feel now and research has shown that children learn much better from working with each other, and research and things than what we would call more traditional methods of teachers standing up there with the blackboard and wrote kind of learning.

KERRY and CHARLIE:

We’re going to make him look alive because we’re gonna have buzzers and we’re actually gonna practice our roars for the dinosaur and he’ll look alive.

LUKE and ARIELA:

What I like best when I’m going to school is that we get to learn about exciting things.

CHARLIE:

This will sound like it rooaaarrrr!

Kerry:

I think it will sound like this ROAR!

With thanks to the children, staff, and parents at Rothes Primary School.