



**Hillhead Primary School
and Nursery Class
Kirkintilloch
East Dunbartonshire
Council
23 August 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which children are involved. We also gather the views of children, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well children are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from children, parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Hillhead Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the Hillhead area of Kirkintilloch. The roll was 330, including 182 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in May 2011. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2009/2010.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Enthusiastic children who take pride in their school and their achievements.
- Success in working in partnership with families and the community.
- The high quality of provision for the care and welfare of all children.
- The leadership of the headteacher and commitment of all staff, resulting in improved attainment and achievement for children.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are happy, confident and enjoy coming to school. In the nursery, most children are enthusiastic about their learning. Almost all children are developing their independence well, for example, by serving themselves at snack time and dressing themselves for going outside. There is scope to improve their concentration on their chosen activities by improving the layout of the large playroom. Across the school, most children listen attentively, follow instructions carefully and work well on their own. Children work well together in pairs and groups, when given the opportunity to do so. Overall, learning is active and motivating. Across the school, teachers share learning intentions with children and give helpful feedback about their work. Children are beginning to comment on their own needs as learners through their learning plans. However, children do not yet have a clear enough understanding of what they are good at and what their next steps in learning are. They now need to take more responsibility for planning and evaluating their own learning experiences.

Children in nursery enjoy developing broader achievements such as growing plants and caring for their garden. They are proud to share their successes from home with the nursery. At the primary stages, children's achievements in and beyond the school are many and varied. Out-of-school clubs, including gardening and badminton, are helping children develop creative, social and physical skills. Achievements are celebrated at weekly assemblies. The school should now take forward its plans to record and monitor children's achievements more systematically. This will help the school to target opportunities more effectively to meet children's needs and track their progress. Children are succeeding in a wide range of subjects and activities. For example, in the nursery, children explore baking and collage materials. Throughout the school, children are enhancing their learning and skills through the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT), including creative use of the national Glow network. Children understand the importance of making healthy choices, and can discuss a variety of ways the school supports and encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

In the nursery class, children are making good progress in developing their early language skills. Most enjoy listening to stories. Most older pre-school children write their name and attempt to copy words they see around the playroom. Staff need to extend opportunities for children to develop early writing skills across the whole playroom. Children are making good progress in early mathematics. They are developing a good awareness of numbers in the course of their play. Across the primary stages, attainment in language is strong and is continuing to improve. Children are encouraged to become 'thinking readers' and enjoy discussing different texts. Overall, children write well for a range of different purposes. They apply their writing skills well across different school subjects and understand the relevance of writing to everyday life. In mathematics, most children are achieving appropriate levels of attainment and by P7 they are secure in mathematical concepts and arithmetical skills. Children are encouraged to use problem-solving skills and these are developing well. Children are able to use their numeracy skills in real-life contexts across the curriculum.

The recently-developed school garden is used particularly well to extend learning in mathematics.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school is effectively working towards implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. Children's learning experiences are well enhanced by a range of outings, enterprise activities and links with the local community. Teachers are helping children make connections across different subject areas and this helps to make learning more relevant. Children are enthusiastic about their topic work which provides good scope for working together and solving problems. Nursery and P1 staff are planning the language and literacy curriculum together. At all stages, children benefit from well-planned literacy and numeracy activities across different subjects. The recent financial education week is a good example of this approach. Teachers should ensure their planning reflects fully the different needs of children in their class and builds on what they already know. Children have access to two hours quality physical education every week, in line with national recommendations.

In the nursery, children are well supported in their play. Staff provide a wide range of interesting experiences and activities to choose from. Most of these are at the right level of difficulty for children. There is scope to build on staff's knowledge of individual children's needs to ensure all children are challenged appropriately in their learning. Across the school, staff know children very well and are sensitive to their learning and emotional needs. They make classrooms interesting and fun places to learn. A variety of assessment approaches are used to help identify any issues with children's learning. The depute head teacher coordinates support for children very well and ensures teachers, support staff and other agencies work effectively together. As a team, they provide a high quality of support for children who are experiencing barriers to their learning. The 'Cool for School' project supports the development of children's social and emotional skills very well. As a result, children are more engaged with classwork and are learning important life skills. Across the primary stages, children are

set regular, creative homework tasks that complement work done in class.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. Nursery staff involve parents fully in their child's learning. For example, parents spend time working alongside their children in the playrooms and outdoors. At all stages, staff keep parents well informed about their child's progress and involve them in the life of the school, for example, through workshops. The parent-teacher association raises valuable funds to help purchase resources. There are appropriate arrangements in place to deal with any complaints. Various external agencies work very effectively with the school to support children's learning. They meet regularly as a multi-agency support group. The school also involves these agencies in evaluating the effectiveness of its work. Strong links with the community and local businesses have been developed. These help raise the school's profile and demonstrate links between school and the world of work. Good arrangements are in place to support children moving from nursery to P1. P7 pupils benefit from a very effective programme which helps ensure a successful transition to Kirkintilloch High School.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Children and staff play a central role in improving their school community. Everyone is involved and feels part of the process. All children in the primary stages play a role in school committees such as eco, health and the pupil council. All children take responsibility for planning the annual school show. There is scope to involve the children in the nursery more in improving their school. All staff are involved in improving the school. Their participation in the 'Teacher Learning Communities' initiative ensures that ideas and good practice

are discussed and shared effectively. The janitor helps children take responsibility through the 'Junior Jannies' group. Support staff run a popular breakfast club to support children's health and wellbeing. The management team checks the quality of the school's work in a number of ways, including regular planning meetings. Effective systems for tracking children's progress and monitoring the work of classes ensure high standards are maintained. The school's annual improvement plan provides a clear focus for improvement and parents, staff and children are involved in setting and monitoring targets.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

Staff have very high expectations for children's care, welfare and development. Relationships between staff and children are extremely positive. Children are valued and cared for as individuals and show respect towards school staff and each other. The school has worked hard to increase children's attendance and improve behaviour. This has resulted in a more positive learning environment for all. There are appropriate arrangements for religious observance and good links have been built with local chaplains. Regular focus weeks on topics such as anti-sectarianism and anti-racism celebrate diversity and promote tolerance of others. The school has effective systems in place for taking action against bullying and for dealing with issues of child protection. Parents are consulted about sensitive health education issues.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The school has well-considered aims and values shared by children, parents and staff. The headteacher provides very strong leadership. She knows each child individually and is committed to ensuring that each child has a happy and successful school experience. She has earned the trust of parents, staff and children. She is very well supported by a depute headteacher and principal teachers who carry out their demanding remits effectively. All staff support each other and

work well as a team. They are encouraged to take responsibility for leading aspects of learning. Together, they provide a child-centred, safe and positive learning environment to help children achieve their potential. The school knows its strengths and areas for further development and is very well placed to improve further.

8. What happens next?

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's robust self-evaluation. As a result, it was able to change its focus during the inspection to support further improvements within the school.

The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Involve children more in taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Continue to develop the curriculum, taking account of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement, which had been addressed.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. 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 and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Hillhead Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Carole McKenzie
23 August 2011

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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