



**Bothkennar Primary School
and Nursery Class
Skinflats
Falkirk Council
22 September 2009**

We published a report on Bothkennar Primary School in June 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in May 2009. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. How well do children learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Bothkennar Primary School and Nursery Class serves the village of Skinflats and the surrounding area in the town of Falkirk.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children's positive attitude to their learning.
- The flexible, innovative approaches to the curriculum.
- The commitment of staff and the headteacher to improving the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

The quality of learning has significantly improved. In the nursery class, children are learning to be independent and are benefiting from improved opportunities to play outdoors. Across the school, children now find lessons more interesting. They are taking an active part in their own learning. They work well together in groups and take lead roles within classes. All children are well behaved and carry out tasks well. Children are more confident and eager to learn. Their skills as independent learners are developing well, for example through assessing their own work and that of others in the class.

Children listen well to each other and show increasing skill in talking in groups. Children now write for a wider range of purposes and are more aware of how to improve their writing. Children in P6 and P7 have regular opportunities to write extended pieces of work for the school podcast on their website. In mathematics, children are making better progress. They are now more able to carry out mental calculations accurately. Children's knowledge of fractions, percentages and decimals is improving. Children now are more skilled at solving problems in mathematics and can transfer these skills effectively in other areas of the curriculum. The proportion of children reaching national levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has not yet shown signs of significant improvement.

The quality of the curriculum has improved significantly. Teachers now provide a broader range of stimulating activities and cover all aspects of the curriculum. They have made a good start to developing the school's own curriculum in line with the national *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children are improving their skills in using information and communications technology. For example, children are in regular contact with a link school in Canada and exchange pen-pal letters. Children's skills in environmental studies are developing well through the use of the outdoors and the local community. Across the school, children achieve well through involvement in a range of positive learning experiences. They are developing their personal and social skills in a range of ways including through the school's activity week at an outdoor centre. Teachers are now more consistent in their approach to children's learning. All teachers share learning outcomes with children and involve them more in planning their learning. They use questioning well to encourage children to think more. Children now receive a varied programme of homework.

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

The school now has a very supportive Parent Council. School staff regularly seek parents' views. Parents are more involved in planning children's learning. There are strong links with the Skinflats Action Group to enhance children's learning in school and out of school. Across the school, the management of support for children's learning is significantly improved. Teamwork among staff is now very effective. The school now has clear systems to identify and support children with additional support needs. Staff use a range of strategies to assess all children's needs. Support staff develop positive relationships with children in class and in the playground. They are deployed effectively to support children's learning. Staff consult parents and children more effectively about children's learning targets in support plans, and about the progress being made.

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

Staff and children are keen to improve their school further. Staff are fully aware of the authority's procedures for protecting children. Teachers are starting to evaluate their own teaching and how well children learn. The headteacher visits classes regularly to look at how teachers are introducing new approaches, and to evaluate the impact of these approaches on children's learning. Teachers are improving their practice through visiting other schools and sharing ideas. Children are giving each other helpful feedback on aspects of their classwork. Through their active involvement in pupil committees, children are listened to and are having their views taken into account more effectively. Members of the pupil council are helping to improve the school, by organising lunchtime activities and by developing the garden area. All children are treated fairly and with respect. Staff are fully aware of the authority's procedures for protecting children.

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

Teachers at all stages now have higher expectations of how children behave and what children can achieve. Children take more pride in their school work. They pay more attention to their work. The school is now involving parents more in supporting their children's work at home through the new target setting arrangements. Teachers and support staff consistently use the new school policy to promote positive behaviour effectively.

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

With a very strong lead from the headteacher, the school now has a very clear sense of direction. The school's plans for improvement are now being shared effectively with staff, parents and children. The headteacher's very effective actions are improving key aspects of the school's work. Staff, parents and children are responding very well to

her leadership. Class teachers now feel more supported and are enthusiastic about leading curricular developments. They enjoy working together as a team and contributing to school improvements. The school now has more effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate key aspects of provision. The headteacher monitors children's progress closely.

8. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of improvement since the original inspection. The headteacher and her staff are making very promising progress in addressing the main points for action since the original inspection of May 2008. They are committed to improving the school and have established effective teamwork to enable them to do so. The school now has a very positive climate for learning. With the strong lead from the headteacher and support from the education authority, the school is well placed to further improve the quality of its work. HM Inspectors will continue to monitor progress. Within one year of publication of this report we will make another visit to the school to conduct a further follow-through inspection and provide a report to parents.

HM Inspector: Sadie Cushley
22 September 2009

To find out more about inspections or get an electronic copy of this report go to www.hmie.gov.uk. Please contact the Business Management and Communications Team (BMCT) if you wish to enquire about our arrangements for translated or other appropriate versions.

If you wish to comment about any of our inspections, contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or alternatively you should write in the first instance to BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsso.org.uk.

Crown Copyright 2009
HM Inspectorate of Education