



**Aberdeen School for the
Deaf and Nursery Class
Aberdeen City Council
5 May 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these 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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

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

1. The school

Aberdeen School for the Deaf and Nursery Class serves the city of Aberdeen. The roll was seven, including four children in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in March 2009. Pupils' attendance was well above the national average in 2007/2008. The school is located in the same building as Sunnybank Primary School. For almost half the children in Aberdeen School for the Deaf, English is an additional language. Children in the nursery have a morning placement in Sunnybank Primary School Nursery Class and an afternoon placement in Aberdeen School for the Deaf. Children in the primary school have shared placements with Sunnybank Primary School. The school has recently become part of the Aberdeen City Sensory Service. The headteacher and depute headteacher manage the school as part of their wider responsibilities within the sensory service.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Positive relationships between staff and children, which support children's learning and communication.
- Approaches to supporting parents.
- The skills of staff in teaching deaf children and meeting their learning needs.
- Staff's skills in developing British Sign Language for children, their parents and all staff who have contact with deaf children.

3. Example of good practice

- The family group coffee morning.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, children are happy and enjoy exploring the range of activities available. They like playing with the hearing children in Sunnybank Primary School Nursery Class with whom they are able to communicate through skilled signing support. In the afternoon nursery group, children respond very well to activities designed to develop their communication skills. They enjoy planning nursery activities with staff. Staff make good use of the limited space in the afternoon nursery to provide choice for children. Children in the nursery class are making good progress in their development and learning. They are listening and responding well to staff's questions, using words or signs. Children interact well with each other and staff through play activities. They are beginning to recognise their names in print. All children enjoy looking at books, and hearing stories which are signed for them. Children's confidence is developing very well. They are becoming more independent, and more able to take the lead in play and in communicating with others.

At the primary stages, children are well motivated and most of the time are keen to learn. They participate well in activities in their mainstream class in Sunnybank Primary School and benefit from learning with their hearing classmates. Children respond positively to small group and individual sessions with teachers of the deaf. These lessons help them develop confidence and become successful learners. When in mainstream classes children are not always able to follow lessons. Children talk about their progress regularly with their teachers. They would benefit from more involvement in identifying

what they need to do to progress further. Children benefit from attendance at the after-school gym club and participated enthusiastically in Book Week in Sunnybank. They took part enthusiastically in physical education with the specialist teacher. They are very proud of art work which is displayed at Aberdeen Station. Children's personal and social skills are improving. They ask for explanations when they do not hear properly. When communicating with staff and their friends, they have the confidence to keep going until they are understood.

Children are making good progress in developing their language skills. Children for whom it is appropriate are developing effective oral language. They use signing effectively to support their oral language when appropriate. Children listen well overall, though they sometimes find it difficult to maintain attention in class. They are making good progress in reading and writing. They enjoy reading, and are developing confidence in reading aloud and talking about what they have read. In mathematics, children are achieving broadly in line with national expectations.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children from the nursery enjoy a broad range of stimulating learning experiences in the morning group. In the afternoon group in School for the Deaf, staff appropriately focus on developing children's ability to communicate orally and through signing. Staff provide high-quality experiences which encourage children to play and interact with each other and with staff. They have increased opportunities for children to be actively involved in play. They now should extend this approach, and have fewer adult-led sessions. Children would benefit from more active play and fewer adult-led sessions. The curriculum for primary-age children is jointly provided by mainstream teachers and teachers from the School for the Deaf. Children benefit from individual or small group teaching for aspects of the curriculum. Teachers of the deaf and mainstream teachers plan together but do not have sufficient awareness of each child's learning activities across the whole-school day or week. As a result, children sometimes miss out on important

learning experiences. The school has begun to implement aspects of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*, for example in planning approaches in the nursery class. Staff support children very effectively when they move to other schools.

Staff know the children in the nursery class and at primary stages very well. In the nursery class, staff make observations of children's play and use this information to plan activities and build on children's skills. Teachers of the deaf at all stages, are very skilled at interacting with children. They use questioning very effectively to help children think for themselves and develop their ideas. They provide activities for children in small groups or as individuals at the right level of difficulty for each child. Across the school, teachers have developed individualised educational programmes (IEPs) which identify long and short term learning targets for children. They have not yet developed a detailed profile of each child's learning which includes information about each child's strengths, next steps in learning and the language spoken at home. Support assistants make very positive contributions to children's learning. They skilfully help children follow what is happening in class. The management team recognise the need to work with teachers of the deaf, class teachers and support assistants to ensure the skills of support staff are matched to the support needs of individual children.

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

The school has developed partnerships with other agencies to support children's learning and progress. The speech and language therapist works closely with teachers of the deaf to assess and improve children's language. Other professionals, such as the audiologist, and the specialist educational psychologist provide helpful advice and support to staff as required. The school has very strong partnerships with parents. Parents are in regular contact with the school and benefit from helpful information about their child's progress. The school holds monthly coffee mornings for parents where they meet

staff and other parents, including parents of deaf children attending other schools. Staff share the learning targets they have identified for children within their IEPs. They now need to involve parents more closely in developing a profile of their child's strengths and interests and in identifying learning targets. The school works in partnership with Sunnybank Primary School to provide shared placements for children. The two schools need to work together more closely to agree responsibilities and develop shared approaches. The school has a very positive partnership with a construction company, which has used the children's art in their billboards. School staff provide very good opportunities for parents and others involved with children's learning to learn British Sign Language (BSL).

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

Staff are committed to improvement, and are well informed about deaf education. They have taken forward approaches and initiatives which have improved children's experiences. They have contributed to a self-evaluation of the whole sensory service. This did not provide clear enough information about the strengths and areas for development within their own work in the School for the Deaf. The headteacher is developing a new approach to self-evaluation which focuses more clearly on the work of the school, and children's outcomes and experiences. This has not yet supported the school's plans for improvement. Staff have recognised the need to take more account of children's views about the school. They plan to use a questionnaire they have been developing to gather children's views.

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

Children in the nursery and primary classes are happy in school and keen to learn. They have very positive relationships with staff. Staff and children across both schools treat children with respect and make good attempts to communicate with them using signing when they can.

The school needs to ensure that children experience suitable opportunities to learn about other cultures and share information about their own cultures. Staff understand their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe and responding to their concerns. They provide a high standard of care and welfare for all children. The school is good at sorting out complaints or issues raised by parents. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and achievements. They use praise well and celebrate children's achievements. They encourage children to develop a positive image of their deafness through a deaf studies programme and story telling in BSL by a deaf member of staff.

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

The headteacher and all staff have a shared understanding of what they want to achieve for the children in the school. They have a good understanding of the impact of deafness on learning and development and regularly review the approaches they use to support children's learning. Due to recent changes in management and uncertainties about the future, staff within the school have not developed a clear set of priorities for improvements in the education they provide. The depute headteacher monitors the lessons delivered to children individually or in small groups by teachers from the School for the Deaf. However, the learning experiences of children in mainstream classes, the breadth and balance of their curriculum and the appropriateness of their support across the week are not monitored. The management team, with support from the local authority and in partnership with Sunnybank Primary School have not yet developed a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities in relation to shared placement, and how to work together to achieve the best for children.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits following this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

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

- Review partnership arrangements with Sunnybank Primary School to ensure best education for children.
- Improve the monitoring of children's experiences to ensure they have high-quality learning and support and an appropriate curriculum.
- Build on recent steps taken to strengthen self-evaluation and focus on improving the school.

At the last Care Commission Inspection, there were no requirements and one recommendation. This recommendation has 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 Aberdeen School for the Deaf and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

HM Inspector: Christine Knight
5 May 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 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.

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

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