



**Ardersier Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
28 April 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.

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1. The school

Ardersier Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Ardersier and the surrounding area. The roll was 104, including 28 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in February 2009. Pupils' attendance was below the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The quality of children's learning experiences, particularly in the nursery.
- Children's ability to cooperate and work together on tasks.
- Staff commitment and teamwork in developing active learning and links across the curriculum.
- The headteacher's success in involving most children, parents and staff in working together to improve the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, children are making very good progress. They enjoy their learning and experience success in a variety of activities. Almost all are confident in speaking to adults and each other. They show interest in early writing and drawing activities. Most children count well and can recognise and match simple shapes and colours. They are learning effectively about the world around them. For example, after a stimulating visit to a large supermarket in Inverness, the children decided to create their own nursery store. They are very good at discussing what they need and taking turns to be shopkeeper and customer. They designed and made attractive supermarket shopping bags. Children are learning how to keep themselves healthy. They try a range of healthy fruits at snack time and can explain which they like or don't like. Children are proud of their achievements. Staff work very well with children and make skilful use of questions to extend children's learning.

Across the primary stages, children are enthusiastic about learning. Most feel safe, nurtured, included and respected. Many are experiencing success, demonstrating responsible citizenship skills and contributing effectively to the school and the community. For example, they respond very positively to their health promotion activities, such as daily tooth brushing and eating healthy snacks. Many take part in an invigorating morning run round the school with a member of staff before they go into class. They take part in a variety of physical education activities in school with enthusiasm. Children work together very well to build their confidence and achieve success. Across the school, they help each other to write. Older children are good at helping nursery children to enjoy books by reading stories with them regularly. They take their responsibilities seriously, for example, they are good at helping younger children to play together in the playground. Children achieve well in a variety of sporting and cultural activities within the school day and through after-school activities. These include cross-country running, football and a movie and a lunchtime club. Children in P7 develop their self-confidence through taking part in a popular residential trip. Children are proud of their personal and wider achievements many of which are displayed throughout the school. They are confident about celebrating these at the school assemblies.

Children are making satisfactory progress from their prior levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. There are encouraging signs that the literacy and numeracy skills of children are improving. This is as a result of staff involving children more actively in their learning. Most children listen well to others' points of view and talk confidently in group discussions. They can give brief reports to the class about their group activities. Children are more eager to read using effective new materials and respond well to staff's improved learning and teaching approaches. They enjoy reading but do not always read aloud with confidence. In writing, children have lots of ideas but do not write enough at length. They do not write for a sufficient range of purposes in other areas of the curriculum. In mathematics, most children are able to use numbers well in practical everyday situations. Many are confident in using

strategies to carry out mental calculations, particularly children at the early stages. Children do not always practise enough of what they have learned before moving on to a new aspect of mathematics. Older children do not have a good knowledge of shape. Across the school, children make good use of surveys to collect information about their topics. They use a limited range of ways to display this information. They are not skilled enough in using computers to handle information.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff provide children with a good curriculum overall. Children in the nursery experience a broad and stimulating range of tasks and activities. Staff give children a very good choice of activities. Children learn well through play activities which are very well supported by staff. In the primary classes, staff have made a promising start to developing the curriculum in line with the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff are using more active learning to enhance children's experiences across the primary stages. They are successful in encouraging children to work together through shared approaches to learning. Staff help children to link their learning well across different aspects of the curriculum. Staff need to improve children's classroom experiences, particularly in information and communications technology (ICT), and in science.

The school does not always meet children's learning needs well. Staff in the nursery know children well and plan a wide range of learning opportunities for them. They provide a high level of support for all children's personal, social and emotional needs. Staff make good use of children's interests and ideas when planning activities to ensure the learning needs of all children are well met. In the primary classes, tasks and activities are not always sufficiently well matched to learners' needs. Some reading and writing activities for higher achieving children are not challenging enough, particularly when working in groups. Teachers give clear explanations and share the purposes of lessons with children. They encourage children to express their views and share ideas together. Most children can

discuss what they have learned from their lessons. The quality of support for children with additional support needs is too varied. Support staff are not always used to best effect to support learning and to ensure that the needs of all children are fully met. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the support given are not working sufficiently well. At all stages, children are clear about what they need to do to improve their writing. This good practice is not yet consistent across other areas of the curriculum. Teachers are giving children more variety in homework tasks which are helping them to learn.

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

Parents contribute to learning in a number of ways and almost all are very supportive of the school. The Parent Council works very well with the school, for example, to help raise funds for bicycle sheds, and reading and ICT resources. Parents support children in the early stages well in learning through play activities and help with football training after school. Senior citizens provide effective support when children are learning about local history. They visit children in P6/P7 to recall their life experiences during World War Two. Parents and catering staff run a well attended breakfast club which provides a popular and healthy start to the day. Staff have effective partnerships with a wide range of external organisations, including the education authority's psychological and social work services. These partnerships have been largely successful in supporting children. Teachers provide helpful information to parents on children's progress through weekly home reports, interim and annual progress reports, and meetings. Complaints from parents, children and other members of the community, sampled in the course of the inspection, had been dealt with effectively by the school. Staff prepare children very well for their transfer from nursery to primary. Children are supported well to help them transfer from P7 to Culloden Academy.

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

In the nursery, children discuss with staff what they enjoy and what they would like to learn. Staff use this information well when planning challenging activities for the children. Across the school, children are developing confidence through taking appropriate responsibilities. The School Media Group is working well with the Community Council to promote the school within the community. Children from P3 to P7 are developing successfully their leadership skills through their involvement in two school groups. The Learning Council is developing ways to make learning fun, including “buddy” writers and games to help children to learn. Across the school, children are responding very enthusiastically to these improvements. Pupil council members encourage children to recycle their litter and are making further improvements to the school playground. Staff work increasingly well together and are keen to share good practice. Their work is leading to improvements in children’s learning experiences. Staff are involved in evaluating the work of the school. They are knowledgeable about national initiatives and are keen to take these forward in the school. Staff are now involved in a more rigorous approach to monitoring children’s progress. They meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss individual children’s achievements. Recently, this has led to improvements in the pace at which children are learning. Staff are not yet using information about children’s learning to set targets which ensure all children make effective progress.

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

Children are proud of their school and, together with staff, welcome visitors. They are well motivated to learn. Children behave well in classes and around the school. Most are confident that the school will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. Children feel safe and valued in school and know what to do if they have any concerns. Staff have very positive relationships with children. They are committed to the wellbeing and support of all children and have an appropriate

awareness of child protection procedures. Staff have raised their expectations of what children can attain in their learning. Children are responding positively to these higher expectations. The school has effective strategies in place to encourage children to attend school. Staff are successful in promoting equality and fairness through including all children in all school activities. Children's achievements are celebrated widely around the school in displays and at assemblies. Children talk about these achievements with pride. The school has achieved success as a Health Promoting School. Children have appropriately frequent opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher has a clear idea of what he wants the school to be. He successfully involves children, parents and staff in developing the school's aims and vision. Together, they have a shared understanding of how the school needs to develop and improve. The atmosphere in the school is very positive. The morale of staff and children is high and they are ready to achieve more. Under the headteacher's effective leadership, teachers are working together well to develop new learning activities and ways of teaching. As a result, children across the school benefit from consistently valuable learning experiences. Staff and children are strongly committed to making further improvements and respond very positively to the leadership of the headteacher. The school's good self-evaluation has led to gradual improvements in standards of attainment and achievement.

8. 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.

- Improve children's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in the primary classes.
- Improve the curriculum and the use of information and communications technology in the primary classes to support learning.
- Build on existing arrangements for self-evaluation and support for learning to ensure the needs of all children in the primary classes are fully met.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were three requirements all of 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 Ardersier Primary School and Nursery Class

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	very 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	good

HM Inspector: June Graham
28 April 2009

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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