

**Integrated Inspection by the
Care Commission and
HM Inspectorate of Education of
Balfron Primary School Nursery Class
Stirling Council**

3 May 2006

**Balfron Primary School Nursery Class
Moor Road
Balfron
G63 0PD**

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001, requires that the Care Commission inspect all care services covered by the Act every year to monitor the quality of care provided. In accordance with the Act, the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education carry out integrated inspections of the quality of care and education. In doing this, inspection teams take account of *National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16*, and *The Child at the Centre*. The following standards and related quality indicators were used in the recent inspection.

National Care Standard	Child at the Centre Quality Indicator
Standard 2 – A Safe Environment	Resources
Standard 4 – Engaging with Children	Development and learning through play
Standard 5 – Quality of Experience	Curriculum Children's development and learning
Standard 6 – Support and Development	Support for children and families
Standard 14 – Well-managed Service	Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale, and these words are used in the report to describe the team's judgements:

Very good : major strengths
 Good : strengths outweigh weaknesses
 Fair : some important weaknesses
 Unsatisfactory : major weaknesses

Reports contain Recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any Requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be noted clearly and timescales given.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher, staff and the education authority. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website: www.carecommission.com and HMIE website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about integrated pre-school inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of integrated pre-school inspections, you should write in the first instance to Kenneth Muir, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to either:

Complaints Coordinator	Hazel Dewart
Headquarters	HM Inspectorate of Education
Care Commission	Denholm House
Compass House	Almondvale Business Park
Riverside Drive	Almondvale Way
Dundee	Livingston
DD1 4NY	EH54 6GA

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. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You can write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

A copy of the HMIE complaints procedure is available from the HMIE website at www.hmie.gov.uk or by telephoning 01506 600 258.

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Care Commission
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Introduction

Balfron Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in January 2006 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. HMIE carried out this inspection on behalf of both organisations and consulted the Care Commission about its findings. The nursery catered for pre-school children aged three to those not yet attending primary school. It was registered for 30 children attending at any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 36.

The environment

Standard 2

The nursery was situated within the primary school and was secure, attractive and welcoming. The playroom was bright, clean and comfortable. Samples of children's work were appropriately displayed to acknowledge children's achievements. The layout of the nursery allowed children to play independently and in smaller groups. However, staff had yet to review the use of space and the organisation of playroom activities to ensure effective challenge in children's learning. Children had fewer opportunities to readily or easily access resources to allow them to make choices and decisions in their play.

Staff made some use of space both in- and out-of-doors to support children in exploring and developing their learning. At times, they used an attractive, enclosed outdoor play area to observe nature and view the changing seasons. Plans to improve this space, to provide better access to physical energetic play, had been identified in the nursery's development plan. The nursery was well resourced to support children's development across the five key aspects of learning. Staff ensured that equipment was clean and well maintained. They implemented appropriate measures to control the spread of infection.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff had very good relationships with children and welcomed them individually on arrival. They knew children very well and praised their contributions, developing their confidence and self esteem. Children were cheerful, confident and enthusiastic in their play. Staff had provided a variety of activities which children sometimes chose for themselves and others initiated by staff. Overall, staff used these well to meet the developmental needs of most children appropriately. Overall, children concentrated well and persevered in their chosen tasks. A few lost interest and found it hard to remain focused in their play. Learning

experiences for these children were not sufficiently challenging to capture their attention. Staff had yet to improve the quality of experiences to extend learning for more able children. They interacted positively with children but did not always use questioning well to further their learning.

Staff took good account of children's views and opinions when planning their learning. They observed children regularly and effectively recorded their progress. They did not make enough use of observations when planning. The headteacher appropriately monitored their planning and provided them with helpful feedback. Staff maintained useful folders of children's work which they made readily accessible to both parents and children. Information on children's progress was shared with parents on an informal daily basis and through formal parents' meetings twice yearly and an annual written report.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Staff regularly praised children to acknowledge their successes and promote their self esteem. They encouraged children to be independent when using a knife at snack, pouring from a jug, emptying the dishwasher and tidying away play equipment. Children took responsibility for washing their hands before snack, brushing their teeth and putting on coats and shoes before going out-of-doors. Children were relaxed and familiar with simple rules and routines. They had established friendships and were developing a good awareness of the needs of others.
- The programme for communication and language was good. Children listened well to information and followed instructions carefully. Most had well-developed language skills and spoke confidently about their own interests and experiences. Children recognised their name in print. A few wrote their names correctly and showed good interest in recognising letter names and sounds at the beginning of words. Staff had yet to make more use of meaningful, play experiences and daily routines to extend children's interest further. There were too few occasions for children to listen to stories read by adults. Staff had yet to develop the book area to encourage children to look at books by themselves.
- In knowledge and understanding of the world, the programme was good. Children were becoming familiar with places in the local area through visits and outings to the library, the bank and a nearby home for the elderly. Staff used a display of aeroplanes, helicopters and hot air balloons to attract children's attention and discuss how things flew. A few children enjoyed pouring and emptying containers of water and sharing their discoveries with each other. They had experience in counting and recognising colours when taking part in computer games and activities with adults. Staff had identified the need to make better use of mathematical language in children's play. Children had fewer opportunities to test out their ideas, draw conclusions or solve simple problems.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Children joined enthusiastically in singing games.

A visiting parent effectively led children in singing songs at the end of the daily session. A group of children cooperated well to create a musical band. They played with real and imaginary instruments to invent music by themselves. Children enjoyed making and modelling with play dough and collage materials. They had good opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings in a well-resourced home corner. They used a large cardboard box to create a range of vehicles to explore imaginary worlds and re-visit familiar experiences. Children had less opportunities to freely select and mix paints or to access a wide enough range of art and craft materials.

- The programme for physical development and movement was good. Children were developing effective control of their fingers and hands through a range of activities, including construction blocks, play dough tools and scissors. They had weekly access to the school gym hall where they enjoyed movement to music. Staff used a large-scale climbing frame, at times, to provide children with a few opportunities for energetic, physical play. They had yet to provide enough daily experiences for children to develop their skills in physical movement, indoors or outside. The management had identified this as a priority within the nursery development plan.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

Staff had established good relationships with children and their families. They knew children well and were sensitive to their individual circumstances. Staff provided helpful newsletters for parents and kept them informed of current events through folders placed in the entrance area. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very satisfied with almost all aspects of the nursery's work. A few wanted more opportunities to discuss their children's progress more frequently with staff.

Parents were actively involved in the work of the nursery through developing the nursery garden and sharing their skills in music and puppet making with children. Staff delivered a workshop to parents focusing on early mathematics. Promotion of learning initiatives between home and school had been identified as a priority by the headteacher, to support parents learning with their children at home.

Staff had established positive links with the primary school and partnership nurseries to support children transferring to school. Parents and children who were new to the nursery were ably supported by staff in settling into playroom routines. Staff had built successful links with a wide range of external agencies. Children requiring additional support for their learning were well supported by additional members of staff. Parents were actively encouraged to be involved in any decisions about their children's development through regular meetings and discussions.

Management

Standard 14

The headteacher had been in post since January 2006. She provided very good leadership and was committed to the nursery.

She shared her vision for its future development effectively with staff and provided strong direction and guidance to the nursery team. The headteacher was well organised, approachable and respected by parents. Appropriate policies and procedures were in place for all aspects to ensure the running of the nursery. Staff were actively involved with, and consulted on, nursery practice.

All nursery staff, including two new members, were enthusiastic and cooperated well together to develop nursery practice. They were suitably qualified and were developing their knowledge, skills and experiences through a good range of training and development courses. A few staff had undertaken some training to assist them in supporting children with additional learning needs. Further training relating to new legislation was planned by the local authority. Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection. The authority had effective recruitment procedures in place to ensure the safety of children. Nursery staff were aware of the Scottish Social Services Council's codes of practice and the implications for their practice.

The headteacher took an active part in monitoring and evaluating nursery practice, including working alongside staff in planning the curriculum and being a positive role model. Staff completed questionnaires and took part in discussions to decide priorities for improving practice. They had correctly identified the need for more focused interventions with children and making more use of toys and books to improve their understanding of other cultures and diversity within society. The headteacher consulted parents and took account of their views when collating development plan priorities. Parents had identified the need to work together with staff to promote more use of technological toys and programmes to help develop their children's numeracy skills. The headteacher shared an informative standards and quality report with parents. They also received regular updates on progress with priorities for improving practice.

Key strengths

- Kind, caring and enthusiastic staff team.
- The very good programme in emotional, personal and social development.
- Effective working relationships with, and support for, parents.
- Commitment and leadership of the headteacher to direct, guide, develop and improve nursery provision.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

The nursery class had acted upon the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should review the layout of the playroom and resources to ensure more challenge and choice for children.
- Staff should further develop their skills in questioning to extend and challenge children's learning.
- Staff should make more use of their observations when planning next steps in children's learning.
- As identified by the headteacher, staff should continue to develop and improve nursery provision and, in particular, those aspects outlined within this report.

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors have asked the pre-school centre and education authority to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report. Where requirements are made, the action plan should include timescales to deal with these. The plan will be available to parents and carers. In liaison with the pre-school centre and education authority, Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors will monitor progress to ensure improvements are in line with the main findings of the report.

Liz Oliver
HM Inspectorate of Education