



**Barnhill Primary School
and Nursery Class
Dundee City Council
23 June 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

Barnhill Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the Barnhill area of Dundee. The roll was 458, including 60 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Courteous and well behaved children.
- Levels of attainment in writing at the early stages.
- The leadership of the headteacher in helping staff to improve the quality of learners' experiences.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery class are happy and keen to learn. They are confident in making choices when playing and concentrate well on their chosen activities. All are forming friendships and are learning to share and take turns. Children are making good progress in most aspects of their learning. They recognise their names and most have fun practising their writing skills during play. Children are developing early number skills through a good variety of games and activities. They enjoy playing outside and learning about the natural world. They now need more chances to explore, investigate and solve problems.

In the primary classes, almost all children concentrate well on their tasks but too often they are not enthused by their activities. Too much time is spent on repetitive textbook exercises. When they are actively involved in their learning they respond positively. For example, they are highly motivated in physical education lessons and when using their skills in information and communications technology (ICT) to work on projects and the school website. Children are encouraged to extend their achievements by taking part in a range of sporting activities, clubs, performances and a residential experience at P7. Some serve on the pupil council and the health and eco committees, successfully representing the views of their classmates. Across the

school, children help to organise school events and raise funds for charities. They are increasing their awareness of bio-diversity through developing the school garden. Children are proud that the school has achieved an Eco-school Scotland award and is an accredited health promoting school. The school recently won a *Focus on Achievement* award from Dundee City Council for a project combining learning in French and ICT. In recent years, standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have remained consistently high, with almost all children achieving appropriate national levels and many exceeding them. Some children are not reaching their full potential, particularly in mathematics. In English language, children at all stages speak confidently. They would now benefit from more structured opportunities to discuss and debate issues. Almost all read fluently and with understanding. At P7, children enjoy discussing their favourite authors and can give a considered view on characters and features of texts they have read. Children at the early stages are making a very good start to learning to write independently. By P7, children write well for a range of purposes. In mathematics, almost all children perform written and mental calculations accurately. They are less skilled at identifying quick methods for mental calculation. At the upper stages, most children use ICT effectively to create spreadsheets and can interpret information from databases. At all stages, children now need more opportunities to apply their skills in class topics and real-life contexts.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children in the nursery class experience a broad and balanced curriculum based appropriately on play. Staff take good account of children's interests when planning activities. They make good use of questioning and praise to extend children's thinking and learning. Some children would benefit from more challenging activities. In the primary classes, staff plan a suitably broad curriculum. They are at an early stage of reviewing programmes of work, drawing on the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. There are some examples of good quality inter-disciplinary learning, linking work in ICT, expressive arts and French. Senior staff understand the need to build on this and

ensure children consistently experience more stimulating and relevant contexts for learning across the school. Opportunities for children in P1 to learn through play have improved this session but there is scope for further improvement. At all stages, children are developing good skills in ICT, using the computer suite. They now need to use their skills in class to support their learning across the curriculum. Staff understand the need to work together to ensure that all children develop enterprise skills consistently, building on prior experiences. Visiting specialists contribute strongly to developing children's skills in expressive arts.

In the nursery class, staff know children well as individuals and as learners. They do not always use their knowledge well enough to ensure that children's learning builds on what they can already do. In the primary classes, teachers set work at appropriate levels for children but the pace of progress is too slow for too many children. The headteacher recognises this and has deployed the support for learning teacher to provide additional support and challenge for identified groups of children. Children requiring additional help are very well supported. The support for learning teacher liaises with class teachers and support staff to provide effective support for children requiring additional help. Classroom assistants provided well targeted support for teachers and groups of children. Individualised educational programmes are in place as appropriate. Parents and children are involved in developing these programmes and progress towards the agreed targets is carefully monitored. The school works effectively with partner agencies to support children's learning. Homework is set regularly but is not always at the right level or varied enough.

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

Relationships between the school and parents are positive. Parents, the Parent Council and the long-standing parents association are very supportive of the school. Parents raise funds, help to run the library, support children's learning in French and help with visits and

after-school activities. They appreciate the information they receive about their children's progress. A few would like more. The headteacher has recently organised a well-received curricular evening for parents and is planning others. Any concerns children or parents may raise are dealt with promptly. The school has effective partnerships with other agencies to support children and families as needed. A link-teacher in the nursery class provides helpful support and advice to staff. Children are well supported as they transfer from pre-school to P1 and from P7 to Grove Academy.

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

The new headteacher has significantly increased the involvement of children and staff in improving the school. Children help to improve their school through the pupil council and the health and eco-committees. Staff should now encourage children to say how their learning might be improved. Children contribute to the smooth running of the school by taking on a range of responsibilities, including helping to run the library, organising outdoor play activities and acting as playground buddies. The headteacher has identified areas for development and shared her thinking with staff. Staff have formed working groups to take forward aspects of school improvement. Many staff help to run after school and lunchtime clubs for children to extend their experiences and achievements. Senior staff review teachers' plans and visit classes. All teachers are now involved in evaluating and reflecting on their own practice. Working together, the headteacher and staff have successfully established a climate of reflection and commitment to improvement.

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

The school has a very friendly atmosphere and relationships between children and staff are positive. Children are courteous and very well behaved. They are proud of their school and take good care of the

school environment. Overall, children are treated with fairness and respect. All staff pay very good attention to children's well being and are familiar with the school's child protection procedures. The school effectively promotes healthy lifestyles and has achieved Health Promoting School status. While staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and attendance, their expectations of children's performance are not consistently high enough. As a result, a number of children do not achieve as much as they could. Children's achievements are celebrated at assemblies and in newsletters. There are regular opportunities for religious observance.

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

The new headteacher has a clear view of how she wants the school to develop and has shared this with staff and the Parent Council. She has established an agenda for improvement which she is implementing with vigour, giving helpful guidance and direction to staff. This agenda focuses on increasing the pace of learning and on ensuring children across the school are actively involved in their learning. The depute headteachers support her well in this and carry out their roles effectively. Staff are taking responsibility for bringing about improvement by contributing to working groups. With the well-considered, positive approach of the headteacher and senior staff, the school is well placed to improve.

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.

- Develop more active and independent learning approaches at all stages.
- Ensure challenge and continuity in children's learning to better meet the needs of all learners, including nursery children.
- Implement plans to develop the curriculum and in so doing, provide more stimulating and relevant contexts for learning.
- Continue to involve all staff across the school in using self-evaluation effectively to improve outcomes for children.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation 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 Barnhill Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	good
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
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	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

Managing Inspector: Isabel Bolton
23 June 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