

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

7 February 2007

**California Primary School Nursery Class
Main Street
California
Falkirk
FK1 2BW**

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

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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
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Riverside Drive	Almondvale Way
Dundee	Livingston
DD1 4NY	EH54 6GA

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Care Commission
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Introduction

California Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in October 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 five years. It was registered for 30 children attending any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 12.

The environment

Standard 2

The nursery was situated in a separate building within the primary school grounds. The nursery was attractive and provided a welcoming, pleasant and stimulating environment, suitable to meet the needs of pre-school children. The premises provided a large playroom, a kitchen area and toilet facilities. The nursery was safe, secure and in a good state of repair.

Staff made very effective use of the available play space. The layout allowed children to play independently and together in small groups. Children's work was displayed attractively throughout the building. Staff made effective use of display areas in the entrance hall to provide helpful information for parents and carers. They had also created interesting displays where children could handle materials and develop their sensory skills. A secure outside play area and garden provided good opportunities for energetic play.

Children had regular access to the wider school environment including the gym hall. Staff provided a good range of suitable resources. They organised the resources effectively to allow children easy access and support independent choice.

Informative risk assessments had been completed and implemented by staff. Effective systems were in place to record health and safety checks. The nursery conformed to all other relevant legislation.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff organised a wide range of activities to meet the needs of children. They listened carefully to children, responding by providing additional resources to support and develop their interests. Staff interacted very effectively with children. They

used dialogue and questions to extend their learning and to encourage children to think more for themselves. There was a good balance of free play and activities which were led by an adult. However, on the day of the inspection, there were too many group activities towards the end of the session and a few children had difficulty concentrating during these activities.

Staff met weekly to plan activities and programmes which offered a good range of experiences and learning contexts for children. Staff regularly noted children's development needs and interests and used this information to influence their plans. They needed to ensure that they recorded these observations systematically. Staff were developing the use of local authority assessment records. They used this information to inform parents of their children's progress at parent interviews and to complete helpful transition records for children transferring to P1. Parents and children were encouraged to access the assessment folders. Staff needed to further develop the folders to include dated examples of children's work and other evidence of achievements.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Children were confident and comfortable with nursery routines. Staff encouraged children to develop their independence skills. They provided very good opportunities for children to choose from a wide range of activities and select materials. Children helped to prepare snack, dressed themselves for outside play and tidied the nursery. They were learning to cooperate, take turns and share resources. Some children were beginning to develop special friendships. Staff encouraged children to follow simple rules and to be aware of the needs of others. They used praise and encouragement appropriately to develop children's confidence and build self esteem.
- The programme for communication and language was good. Staff had created an attractive book area with a range of quality story and reference books. Children chose to look at books independently and most listened well to a story at group time. Some children listened carefully to a taped story at the listening centre. Staff provided a range of writing tools to encourage children in mark making. Children experimented with the shallow sand tray making marks and symbols with the tools and their fingers. Staff needed to extend the variety of paper and resources and extend opportunities for children to write throughout the playroom. Many children recognised their own names on snack cards and art labels. Staff encouraged their awareness of familiar words and symbols through careful labelling of the interesting displays throughout the playroom.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Staff provided interesting sensory experiences for children. They were 'digging for treasure' in the sand and exploring the texture of 'gloop' in the water tray. Staff organised a wide range of materials to encourage children to develop an understanding of early mathematics. They matched shapes and colours and staff helped them count during their play. Children were learning about information and communications technology (ICT). They

used the computer confidently and had access to a microwave and mobile phone in the house corner. However, staff needed to encourage children to experiment with a wider range of resources across all areas of the nursery. Staff talked to the children about the weather and encouraged them to observe changes in the world around them. They did not provide sufficient resources for children to investigate and explore during outside play.

- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was very good. Children used the well-equipped art area to express themselves creatively. They selected from a wide range of resources, mixed their own paint and created interesting models. Staff provided a selection of percussion instruments for children to make their own music and experiment with rhythm. Children sang familiar songs enthusiastically and joined in singing games. They created their own tunes as they experimented with new music software on the computer. Staff provided attractive areas for imaginative play. Children had access to interesting dressing-up outfits to enhance their role-play activities. Some children invented imaginary situations when playing with the train set and small figures.
- The programme for physical development and movement was good. Children were developing good control of their hands and fingers. They threaded pasta carefully to create necklaces, completed puzzles and used a wide range of construction toys to create models. Children were developing their skills using a range of fastenings on their coats and shoes. Staff organised daily access to outside play. Children were developing skills using a range of wheeled toys. They pedalled tricycles and pushed scooters around the road track and then manoeuvred them into the parking spaces. Children were supported by staff as they practised throwing and catching balls and hoops. Staff provided weekly games sessions in the school gym but did not plan sufficiently for progression in a range of skills. They needed to extend children's daily access to energetic outside play.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

Staff had developed very good relationships with parents and families. They encouraged parents to become involved in the wider life of the school and kept them informed through regular newsletters and a range of helpful notices and communications. Staff organised informative curriculum evenings and workshops to help parents find out about the curriculum and to discuss their child's progress. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very satisfied with all aspects of the service.

Staff organised an extended transition programme to support children transferring to P1. Children had opportunities to be involved in assemblies and to use the school facilities throughout the year. The P1 teacher visited children in the nursery and arranged classroom and playground visits throughout the summer term.

Staff had established helpful links with a range of agencies and other local services. They accessed support from local specialist

provision for children requiring additional help in their learning. Children's development needs were clearly identified and planned for in individualised educational programmes (IEPs). The headteacher had identified the need for all staff to access further training in additional support needs legislation.

Management

Standard 14

The headteacher provided very effective leadership of the service. She had a dual role as the school manager with a part-time nursery teaching commitment. The headteacher worked alongside the staff team for up to two nursery sessions per week, providing a model of good practice. She also provided support and guidance through regular meetings and informal visits.

Staff benefited from an annual review programme which helped to identify development needs. They had opportunities to attend relevant training courses provided by the local authority and were involved in whole-school development programmes when appropriate. Staff had been provided with copies of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice and were aware of the implications for the service. They had received recent training in child protection procedures and understood their responsibilities for the protection of children.

The headteacher had begun to involve all staff in the process of self-evaluation. They met regularly to evaluate identified aspects of nursery provision against early years quality indicators. The headteacher needed to ensure that staff evaluated all aspects of the service systematically and involved parents and children in the process. A development plan had been written with clear targets for improvement. Staff were making good progress towards most targets. The headteacher worked closely with staff and monitored many aspects of the provision informally. She needed to further develop procedures for formal monitoring of children's learning experiences and all aspects of the service.

Key strengths

- Attractive, stimulating nursery classroom with access to a secure outside play area.
- High-quality staff interaction.
- The very good programmes for emotional, personal and social development and expressive and aesthetic development.
- Very good support for children and families.
- The very effective leadership of the headteacher and the high-quality staff teamwork.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

There was one requirement and one recommendation made in the previous Care Commission singleton report.

The local authority had addressed the requirement. The headteacher had made satisfactory progress towards addressing the recommendation.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should continue to develop planning and assessment procedures to be more responsive to children's individual interests and development needs.
- Staff should further develop systems to consult with parents and children about all aspects of the service.
- The headteacher should continue to develop robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of children's experiences.

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.

Jane Mason
HM Inspectorate of Education