



**Drumbowie Primary School
Falkirk Council
25 August 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

Drumbowie Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the village of Standburn and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 25 when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Confident children who are keen to learn.
- Children's wide range of personal achievements.
- Children's skills in improving the environment.
- Active learning experiences, particularly in the early years.
- Partnerships with parents and the community.
- Leadership of the headteacher and high quality teamwork to improve the school.

3. Examples of good practice

- Involvement of children and parents in improving the school.
- Science laboratory role-play in the early years.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, children are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Younger children learn actively through play. Opportunities for role-play are helping them develop impressive skills in exploring and investigating in science. Across the school, children make very good use of information and communications technology to help them learn.

They work together with their teachers to set weekly targets to help them progress. Across the school, children learn very well together when working in groups. Most are becoming confident and independent learners. More could do so if they were given more opportunity to make choices about what to learn.

The school provides children with a very broad range of experiences to achieve widely. Most children learn new skills in out-of-hours activities such as sport, singing or chess. At all stages, children have sound knowledge about the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. Children have many opportunities to develop a sound understanding of how to improve the environment. Their success in such areas has led to the school achieving national awards from Eco-Schools Scotland and the John Muir Trust. Children are learning to understand and appreciate Scots culture through study of a range of appropriate topics. Children at P6 and P7 enjoy learning French and can introduce themselves confidently in the language. Children have developed a very good understanding about life in developing countries through their work for charity and fair trade initiatives. They have gained confidence and abilities in making presentations through local competitions, showcase events and film making. Almost all children feel happy, safe and active at school. Overall, they are achieving very well.

The school has maintained high standards of attainment in reading, writing and in mathematics over the last few years. Almost all children, including those with additional support needs, are making good progress. Almost all children attain appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing and mathematics. High numbers of children are achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected, particularly in reading. A few children are capable of achieving even higher standards. In English language, most children listen well to each other and share their views confidently. The majority speak enthusiastically about books they have enjoyed reading. They can describe how an author uses words to good effect. Children need more frequent opportunities to write at length to improve their skills further. In mathematics, children's understanding is good.

The majority are quick and accurate when making written and mental calculations. Most children can interpret information confidently from a wide range of graphs and charts. Children can explain clearly how they reach an answer. They need to continue to develop their skills in problem-solving.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Overall, the school provides a good, broad and well-structured curriculum. Staff have made a positive start to implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. A series of special 'focus weeks' provides children with challenging, enjoyable learning experiences which connect several areas of the curriculum. New projects need to be relevant enough for all age groups within each class and build on children's prior knowledge and skills. Most children are able to use their skills in literacy to learn effectively in other areas. Enterprise activities and partnerships with local employers are helping to develop children's understanding of the world of work. Visiting specialist teachers of music, physical education and French enhance children's learning. While the gym hall is small, staff make good use of the multi-court sports area to provide energetic physical education for children. The school is working towards providing children with two hours of high quality physical education each week.

Staff know children very well. Teachers organise tasks and activities which suit the learning needs of most children. They need to continue to give individual children extra help with classwork when needed to ensure they achieve their best. The support for learning team provides well-targeted support to children with additional learning needs. These children benefit from well-planned individualised educational programmes. The school should now involve children more in setting and reviewing targets within these programmes on a more regular basis. Children who have English as an additional language receive helpful specialist support. Staff monitor children's progress carefully. Where children learn best, lessons are well paced and exciting. Staff should continue to develop children's active involvement in learning. Homework is regular but sometimes needs to be more varied.

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

The headteacher has been very successful in improving partnership with parents. Staff work closely with the very active Parent Council which helps with fundraising and improving the school grounds. Staff, children and parents work together well to improve learning in a number of important ways. They recently improved approaches to positive behaviour management during a 'café conversation' event. The headteacher has developed very good communication with parents through colourful newsletters, a very informative website and an open-door policy. Parents can choose to receive electronic copies of the newsletter. Children benefit from strong community links with the library service and local employers. Staff have formed very effective partnerships with a range of support services. The school works very closely with pre-school establishments to help children make a confident move into P1. Children moving from P7 to Braes High School receive a high level of pastoral support from staff. Annual reports to parents need to give more information about children's progress and next steps in learning. The school is good at sorting out any concerns and complaints.

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

The headteacher has been successful in involving the whole community in improving the school. There is a strong sense of teamwork among staff, children and parents. Children feel that they have a say in making the school better and are pleased that staff listen to their views when improving learning and teaching. Almost all of the children are involved in improving the school through the pupil council, eco group and 'school action on nutrition' group. All staff contribute very well to improving children's experiences. They make effective use of professional development to extend approaches to active learning and help children to develop group working skills. Teachers are skilled in evaluating practice and share ideas to improve teaching

and support for children. Support staff work well with teachers to plan focus weeks as well as run development groups and committees. The school tracks children's progress effectively and this is helping to raise attainment. Staff should now monitor children's wider achievements more closely.

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

The school is welcoming and children enjoy learning at school. They are polite and very well behaved. Staff treat children fairly and with respect. Along with adult members of the school community, children identify strongly with the school. Staff have very positive relationships with children and have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. Staff are highly committed to children's care and welfare. The school has an appropriate policy for child protection and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Staff cover aspects of equality and cultural diversity through focus weeks but need to do more to develop children's understanding across the curriculum. The school regularly shares children's achievements through assemblies and high quality displays around the school. The school successfully promotes healthy lifestyles. There are regular opportunities for religious observance in school and in the local church.

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

The headteacher, supported by staff, is highly committed to the school and the children. Across the school, staff take opportunities to lead work related to improvement priorities. They are developing their leadership roles through taking responsibility for coordinating aspects of the work of the school. Staff meet regularly to discuss how to improve provision for children. The headteacher has successfully improved children's achievements and raised the profile of the school. She monitors the work of the school very well and provides a high level of support and encouragement to staff. She needs to continue to use self-evaluation activities to challenge staff to improve learning

experiences further. As a result of strong and effective leadership, and the high level of commitment of all staff, the school is well placed to improve further.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits following this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

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

- Continue to implement *Curriculum for Excellence* and build on children's prior learning.
- Help individual children to achieve their best by meeting learning needs fully.

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 Drumbowie Primary School.

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

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Graeme Logan
25 August 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