

**Integrated Inspection by the  
Care Commission and  
HM Inspectorate of Education of  
Muirtown Primary School Nursery Class  
The Highland Council**

**28 April 2004**

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.

<b>National Care Standard</b>	<b>Child at the Centre Quality Indicator</b>
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

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher, staff, Director of Education, Culture & Sport. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website: [www.carecommission.com](http://www.carecommission.com) and HMIE website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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## **Introduction**

Muirtown Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in January 2004 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. An inspection of the primary school was carried out at the same time by HMIE and is the subject of a separate report. The nursery catered for children from three years of age to entry to primary school. At the time of the inspection the roll was 38.

## **The environment**

The nursery class was located in Muirtown Primary School. The accommodation was warm and bright with very attractive, well-presented displays of children's work. Although within the appropriate standards, space in the playroom was limited and needed improvement. Despite staff's efforts to maximise the playroom space, children were unable to access a full range of activities, especially energetic play. Staff had limited access to the school gym hall. They used a small, enclosed grassed area for energetic play and to encourage children's interest in nature. However, access to this area, which was located on a steep bank some distance from the school, was difficult and should be improved.

Appropriate security arrangements were in place within the playroom itself. However, in the adjacent corridor area, which children accessed independently, the external school doors could be opened easily from the inside by children. The education authority and headteacher should review the internal access arrangements adjacent to the nursery and improve security further. Toilet facilities were appropriate. The well-organised resources were plentiful for most aspects of play.

## **Quality of children's experience**

Staff had established a warm and caring learning environment. They had very good relationships with children and interacted very well to support and extend children's learning. Children were well motivated and interested and chose freely from a variety of learning experiences.

Staff organised activities well to provide a good balance between activities children could choose for themselves and those directed by adults. However, the limited size of the children's playroom restricted the breadth of experiences offered to children. Staff planning took good account of children's interests and set out clearly what they were expected to learn. Staff observed and recorded children's progress very well and made very effective

use of assessment information to plan the next steps in children's learning. They shared this information with parents and outside agencies, as appropriate. Features of the curriculum provided included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Staff provided stimulating opportunities for children to develop a wide range of personal and social skills. They made effective use of praise and encouragement to foster children's confidence and independence. Children were happy and settled and comfortable with nursery routines. They co-operated very well with adults and each other and were aware of the needs of others. They were actively involved in setting out and tidying away materials.
- In communication and language, the programme was good. Staff provided regular opportunities for children to listen and talk purposely in small and large groups. Staff made effective use of print and labelling in displays to promote children's early reading. Some children could recognise their own name and a few could write it. Staff should develop further early writing activities for children.
- The programme for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world was very good. Children made regular visits to local shops, the garden centre and beach to explore the local area. They were developing skills of observation and investigation. Most children could identify colours and shapes and were developing good skills in sorting, counting and matching.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Staff provided children with a variety of materials to develop their skills in painting, drawing and craft work. Children took part enthusiastically in role-play. They made music using percussion instruments. Staff needed to extend opportunities for children to develop skills in role-play and music and movement.
- The programme for physical development was good. Children were developing good hand control by painting, gluing, cutting and pouring. The outdoor area was not easily accessible from the playroom. It was occasionally used for energetic play. Staff should provide children with more regular experiences of energetic play on large-scale physical play equipment.

## **Support for children and families**

Staff knew children well and provided effective support for them and their families. Relationships with parents were good. Staff provided parents with useful up-to-date information through regular newsletters, parents' meetings, informal discussions and attractive notice boards. There were regular opportunities for parents to take part in more formal consultations about their child's progress. Parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about the work of the nursery. However, some wanted more information about nursery activities and their child's progress. Some expressed concern about the limited size of the playroom and the access arrangements.

There were effective arrangements in place to support children's transition to primary school. The headteacher liaised with outside agencies, as appropriate, to provide support for children with additional needs. She should ensure staff are trained in child protection procedures as a matter of priority.

## **Management**

The headteacher provided effective leadership and was clearly committed to providing a quality service. The deputy headteacher supported staff well in managing the smooth day-to-day running of the nursery. The enthusiastic, committed and approachable staff formed a very good team.

Working with staff, the management team had developed a wide range of policies and procedures for all aspects of the nursery. They provided clear guidance for staff and parents. Staff were fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the nursery. An annual programme of staff review was in place and staff took part in a range of appropriate training and development.

## **Key strengths**

- The quality of interaction between staff and children.
- Children's very good experiences in emotional, personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world.
- The enthusiastic, committed and approachable staff and their very good teamwork.
- The effective leadership of the senior management team.

## **Recommendations for improvement**

- The education authority should address the accommodation issues identified in this report. It should improve access to the outdoor play area.
- The headteacher should ensure staff are trained in child protection procedures.

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.

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