



**Nethermains Primary
School and Nursery Class
Denny
Falkirk Council
23 March 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which children are involved. We also gather the views of children, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well children are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its 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 from children, parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Nethermains Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the west side of the town of Denny. In addition, the school includes two classes for children with additional support needs, arising from moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties. The two classes are collectively known as the enhanced provision. Children in the enhanced provision attend from across the Falkirk Council area. The roll was 174, including 67 in the nursery, and 17 children in the enhanced provision when the inspection was carried out in February 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children's attitudes, behaviour and enthusiasm for their learning and wider achievements, particularly in health and wellbeing.
- The quality of relationships, care and attention given to all children.
- Partnerships with parents and other professional agencies.
- The positive, enthusiastic staff team led by the headteacher.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery play enthusiastically and enjoy learning. They are developing their skills and knowledge through a good range of activities both inside and out-of-doors. Children are making friends and most play well together taking turns and sharing toys. A few children find some activities too easy and would benefit from more activities to help them concentrate on their interests. At the primary stages almost all children are motivated and keen to learn. They are becoming more actively involved in their own learning. Children are caring, confident and respond well when given responsibility, such as, in the shared reading initiative. Children regularly use information and communications technology (ICT) to carry out research and develop their skills. In all classes, children work well together and confidently make helpful comments about their own and each other's work. Children from the classes in the enhanced provision are supported when they join classes in the primary school. All children feel valued by staff and each other.

Children are very proud of their achievements. They help organise numerous charity events and collections to increase their citizenship

skills. The highly successful health week led to an increased understanding of the need to keep fit and healthy. As a result, with the support of their class teacher, children at P7 wrote, created and recorded a song about healthy lifestyles, 'Max in the Middle'. Recent improvement to the playground, taking account of children's views, is encouraging children to be more active outdoors. Across the school, enterprise activities are helping children understand different ways of thinking. They believe they are getting better at solving problems as a result. For example, children ran a Fair-Trade Café which helped promote their understanding of global issues of poverty. Almost all children are developing effective leadership and teamwork skills in class, as mentors to others and buddies to younger children, and through participating in committees and residential trips.

In the nursery, children are making good progress in early language and mathematics. They listen well in groups, enjoy conversations and can follow instructions. The majority of children are aware of letter sounds and are attempting to write their own name. Most are confident when playing number games. They can sort and match colours and objects and count to ten. They are beginning to describe sizes and shapes with increasing confidence. Standards of attainment in English language and mathematics have improved over the last three years. Most children attain appropriate levels in English language and mathematics and some are achieving these earlier than expected. Children with additional support needs are making steady progress. In all classes children listen well. They are confident in presenting at assemblies, in shows and in their class. Children enjoy reading and are becoming fluent. They particularly enjoy their work on Scots language and the visits by Scottish authors. Attainment in writing is improving steadily as a result of teachers' new approaches to the teaching of writing. In mathematics, children are developing speed and accuracy in mental and written calculations. Children use ICT effectively, for example in using information from traffic surveys. Children are beginning to use problem solving skills across the curriculum.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class and school, children experience a good range of activities. Nursery children were investigating changes between ice and water. They can express themselves well in art and craft activities. The school is developing its planning of the curriculum to take account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The senior management team need to ensure that in developing the curriculum, teachers enable children to make consistent and good progress in their learning. Staff make good use of topics, such as 'the Victorians' and 'the Romans', to ask children their views and develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. Visiting specialists develop children's skills in music, art and craft and physical education. In the primary classes all children engage in two hours of good quality physical education each week.

Across the nursery class, staff know children well and are caring and responsive. They are beginning to develop individual profiles to describe how well children are learning. Across the primary classes staff are improving their approaches to meeting the needs of all children. In most classes tasks and activities are at the right level of difficulty. However, for a few children classwork is too easy and they could make quicker progress in their learning. Throughout the nursery and primary classes, staff with the help of the support for learning teacher carefully identify and assess what help is needed for children with additional support needs. In the enhanced provision, staff work sensitively with children and their families. Attention given by staff to children's dignity and personal care is of an extremely high standard. When working with children with additional support needs, staff need to use consistent ways of communicating with children. This would help to meet children's needs more effectively. Across the primary stages, homework tasks have recently been revised and are now more varied and are proving to be more motivating for children.

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

The school has very effective contacts with external agencies to support children and families. These include speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, and health and social work services. Parents support the school very well. Commendably, the headteacher runs an effective induction process for the high number of parents who wish to be helpers in the school. The Parent Council is active and has helped develop the school's citizenship programme and the positive behaviour strategy. The school communicates regularly through class newsletters, its website, open afternoons and written progress reports. The school consults parents about sensitive health matters and deals effectively with any complaints. The school has well-planned arrangements to support children moving from nursery to P1, between classes and to Denny High School.

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

Staff and children work well together to keep improving the school and nursery class. Children are beginning to be consulted on what is being taught and how they can improve their work, but there is scope to develop this further. Children enjoy taking on additional responsibilities. They feel the system of election to committees, such as those for eco and health activities, is fair and they enjoy helping to organise fundraising events. The school is working towards their Eco-Schools Scotland Green Flag Award and have achieved their second level Health Promotion Award from the local authority. Parents are asked regularly for their views of parents' evenings and developments in the school's improvement plan. All staff take on additional responsibilities for leading new initiatives within the improvement plan. The work on active literacy is having a positive effect on children's writing. The senior management team visit classes

regularly and review forward planning with staff to ensure children are progressing well. Staff make informal visits to other classes to observe and share good practice.

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

Children in the nursery and school feel safe and happy. In the nursery, they are helped to be responsible, take turns and share resources. At the primary stages children are very kind and considerate, helping and supporting each other in class. They behave very well. They recognise that school is helping them to develop appropriate attitudes and behaviour towards others whose needs are different. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour but could have higher expectations of children's learning to improve attainment. They could increase the rate of learning and involve children more in understanding what they need to do to improve their work. Staff celebrate children's successes in class, at assemblies, and through school displays. They have regular opportunities for religious observance. The school has received national recognition for its work on Scots language. All staff know what to do to keep children safe and well. They understand child protection arrangements. The school takes appropriate action if children are absent from school without explanation. All staff are highly committed to children's wellbeing. They enjoy very good relationships with children. There is a caring, supportive ethos throughout the school.

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

The headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction. Children, parents and staff value her supportive and sensitive approach. The two job-sharing depute headteachers provide good support to the headteacher and staff. Staff work well as a team and are enthusiastic about taking forward school priorities for improvement. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for

improvement and children are achieving well overall. The school is well placed to continue to improve through building on existing good practice.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school we will make no further visits in connection with 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 school.

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

- Further develop the curriculum in the nursery class and primary stages.
- Improve aspects of learning and teaching and extend opportunities for children to take responsibility for their learning.
- Meet the needs of some children more effectively.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were five recommendations made. All five 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 Nethermains Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
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

HM Inspector: Elizabeth Paterson
23 March 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600 236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Where the school has a nursery class, you can contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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