



**Pulteneytown Academy
Primary School and
Nursery Class
Wick
The Highland Council
20 April 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

Pulteneytown Academy Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the south west area of Wick. The roll was 197, including 46 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in February 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009. Around one third of children attend the school as a result of parental placing requests.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Highly-motivated children who are keen to learn and are proud of their own and each other's achievements.
- Very effective teaching which provides children with worthwhile and challenging learning experiences.
- The teamwork and commitment of all staff to developing the curriculum and improving children's learning.
- Partnerships with parents, support agencies and the wider community to meet learning needs and broaden children's experiences.
- Improvements through self-evaluation and the leadership shown by the headteacher and promoted staff.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

At all stages of the school, children are highly motivated and engaged in their learning due to the outstanding quality of learning experiences provided for them. Children benefit from a wide range of highly effective learning and teaching approaches that include creative and investigative activities. They demonstrate confidently their learning to teachers and to each other in a variety of ways. They are able to apply their learning successfully in new situations. Children work very well on their own and with others. In group tasks, they respect each other's views and share their opinions and ideas confidently. In the nursery, children are keen to learn new things and complete their chosen tasks enthusiastically. They help to plan their activities and

interact very well with each other. They are very good at sharing and taking turns. Children's experiences are enhanced by frequent opportunities to learn, play and investigate outdoors. At the primary stages, children often take the lead in learning. They have opportunities to follow their own interests and set themselves challenging goals. They use feedback from teachers and their classmates very well to improve their learning. They regularly produce work of a very high standard across different areas of their learning. All children feel safe, happy and very well cared for in school.

Children are developing very effective citizenship and enterprise skills across a variety of activities. They are strongly committed to protecting the local environment and learning about global issues. Through successes in individual and team sports, especially swimming, netball and football, children are developing their fitness and commitment to leading an active lifestyle. Children perform confidently at assemblies and in school shows. They take on responsibilities willingly, for example as members of the pupil council, eco and health committees and as junior road safety officers. Working in partnership with staff, parents and the community, they have developed very effective fundraising skills for a wide range of local, national and international charities. Children from all stages celebrated their achievements very effectively with the school and wider community during recent events to mark the school's 50th anniversary.

Across the school, children are making very good progress in their learning. In the nursery, children often choose to write during play activities. They enjoy sharing books with each other and talk enthusiastically about characters and what is going to happen next. Children use their early numeracy skills very well to collect information and make graphs to show their favourite fruits. At the primary stages, almost all children achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in mathematics and most achieve these levels in reading and writing. Across the school, many children attain national levels earlier than might normally be expected. Children with additional support needs make very good progress towards meeting their personal targets. At

all stages, children listen carefully to each other and to adults and are keen to share their ideas and opinions. Children use their reading skills very effectively across their learning, particularly in their topic work. They have a very good knowledge of a wide range of authors and poets and they understand what skilled writers do well. As a result, children write imaginative stories and poems and informative, well-organised reports, for example on their topics and science experiments. They use their mathematical skills confidently in a variety of situations, for example written and mental calculations and problem solving. At all stages, children gather and record information accurately, and make and interpret graphs, charts and spreadsheets. They use information and communications technology such as digital cameras, computers and whiteboards, very confidently to support and enhance their learning.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff have taken very positive and innovative steps to implement *Curriculum for Excellence*. As a result, the school provides high-quality learning experiences that are relevant to children's lives and interests and that maximise success for all. Staff are highly skilled in planning lessons that build on what children know and what they can do. Materials and activities they design to assess children's learning have been recognised nationally as highly effective practice. Well-planned tasks help children to develop and use their skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in different and challenging situations across their learning. Staff support children very well to make thoughtful choices about what they would like to learn and the best way to go about it. Nursery staff provide a curriculum that is firmly based on play and enjoyment. They ensure that all children have very good opportunities to take part in a range of challenging experiences. Across the primary stages, children benefit from a minimum of two hours of high-quality physical education each week.

At all stages, teachers and support staff match tasks and activities very well to meet children's different learning needs, across the curriculum. Homework tasks are regular and challenging and support

very well what children are learning in school. Teachers use their knowledge of how individual children learn to plan experiences carefully. Teachers use questions very well to reinforce what children know and to develop their thinking. Support staff provide very effective help for individuals and groups. Their contributions are valued highly by children and other staff. Very effective partnerships with educational and health agencies help children with additional support needs to make very good progress.

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

Children at all stages benefit from very strong partnerships with parents and the community. The Parent Council works very closely with staff to enhance children's experiences. Parents and other members of the community help children learn about the world of work. Workshops, interesting newsletters and detailed progress reports keep parents very well informed about their child's learning. The school has effective arrangements for dealing with parental concerns and complaints. The headteacher consults parents on sensitive aspects of health education and on different areas of the school's work. Parents' views, along with comments from children and staff, help to shape the school's improvement plan. The school has very well-established links with the Active Schools coordinator. As a result, children are benefiting from a wide range of sports activities, including keep-fit and rugby. The transition programme to support children moving from home to nursery and from nursery to P1 is very effective. Children in P7 are supported very well in moving to Wick High School.

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

The school is outward looking and staff continually look for examples of very best practice to help it to improve further. Staff are highly

committed to the improvement agenda. They lead and take responsibility for important aspects of the school's work, during and after the school day. In lessons, teachers frequently discuss children's learning with them, and how to improve their experiences. Support, clerical and janitorial staff contribute significantly to the life and work of the school. The headteacher and promoted staff support teachers very effectively to ensure children benefit from strong links between self-evaluation, professional development and school improvements. These links focus clearly on improving learning and teaching, meeting learning needs and developing the curriculum. Children at all stages have an important and active role in school improvement. The pupil council and the eco and health committees regularly gather children's views and discuss them with senior staff. This has led to improvements in, for example, the high numbers of children now choosing to eat more vegetables at lunch time or bring a healthy packed lunch.

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

The school has a very welcoming and nurturing atmosphere. Staff have very high expectations of children's attendance, behaviour and achievement. Children respond as eager, well-behaved learners. Children have helped to choose the school motto which encourages them to achieve their best and to be proud of themselves and their school. Staff show a high level of care and concern for children and families. They are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection. Staff provide very good opportunities for religious observance. Children are developing a clear understanding of equality and fairness, including how to tackle racism, through interesting class work.

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

The school is successfully developing motivated and creative children who are enthusiastic learners and ready to take on challenges.

Children play an important part in helping the school to achieve its aims. The quality of leadership for learning shown by the headteacher is outstanding. She is supported very well by the depute headteacher and principal teacher who are both highly-skilled practitioners. As a team, they encourage staff at all levels to show initiative and lead curricular developments, to very good effect. All staff work very effectively together to ensure that the school provides a high-quality experience for all children. The school is therefore very well placed to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's self-evaluation to make its evaluations and the school agreed with these evaluations at an early stage of the inspection. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more.

The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, 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 area for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to build on the very effective practice and high-quality experiences for learners.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements. Three recommendations were made. All 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 Pulteneytown Academy Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	excellent
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	excellent
Improvement through self-evaluation	excellent

HM Inspector: Lesley A Allan
20 April 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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