



**South Primary School
and Nursery Class
Wick
The Highland Council
8 June 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.

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. How well do children learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

South Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the Pulteneytown area of Wick. The school roll was 81 and there were 18 children in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in April 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009. The number of children registered for free school meals was well above the national average.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Motivated, responsive children who are keen to learn.
- Care and welfare of children and support for those who require additional help.
- Children's achievements beyond the classroom.
- The headteacher's impact on promoting partnerships for the school and with the local community.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery, most children are well motivated and take responsibility for choosing tasks and taking turns. All children are happy, friendly and well behaved. Almost all children in the primary school are well motivated and engage well in tasks set by their teachers. They respond very well when staff make learning more active and relevant. Children cooperate well with each other in pairs and small groups. They need more regular opportunities to use information and communications technology to support their learning. In the majority of classes, children have begun to evaluate their own and each others' work but they are not yet clear enough about how to improve their learning. Almost all children feel safe and well cared for.

Children at all stages broaden their learning and achievements through a range of out-of-class activities. Children in the nursery benefit from a variety of eco activities. Children in the primary school are developing their reading and playing of traditional music. They have participated successfully in a Caithness-wide art competition and the Caithness music festival. They have a very good understanding of

how to keep healthy. They have developed confidence through performing music to different audiences. Children are developing effectively their skills in football, netball and swimming. Children at the middle and upper stages have improved their gymnastic abilities well through challenging tasks. P6/7 children are building their own kit car to take part in a national technology competition. Off-site trips and visiting speakers have increased children's understanding of topic work and enhanced their confidence in design, music, drama and dance activities. Children across the school have increased their understanding of the needs of others by raising generous funds for charity.

Most children in the nursery are making good progress in talking, listening, early reading and writing. They listen well for information and follow instructions and respond with enthusiasm to stories and songs. They need more opportunities for writing through play experiences. Across the school, the majority of children are making good progress in their learning and have attained appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Over the last few years there have been no clear trends in attainment. In English language, most children listen well to staff and each other and talk enthusiastically about books they have read. The highland literacy project approaches to teaching reading are beginning to have a positive impact on children's attainment. Most children write well for a variety of purposes. In mathematics, the majority of children attain appropriate levels earlier than would be expected. They need more regular opportunities to do mental calculations and to display and interpret information from graphs. Most children carry out written calculations accurately and confidently. They would benefit from more help to understand when and how to apply problem-solving strategies. Children who require additional support are making appropriate progress.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children at all stages learn in a broad range of areas. Staff have developed their approach to teaching reading successfully as part of

the highland literacy project. At the upper stages, children benefit from learning French. All children benefit from two hours of good-quality physical education each week. Children have well-developed opportunities to develop their skills in a range of different art activities. They have good opportunities to learn through expressive arts. Children were enthusiastic about their involvement in the Caithness science festival but curricular opportunities for science and technology need to be extended. The school has not yet made sufficient progress in improving the curriculum by taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure children make a positive move from nursery into P1. Well-established links with staff from Wick High School ensure support for curriculum projects and a smooth and more confident move for children to secondary school.

Staff in the nursery plan and evaluate children's learning regularly and are responsive to children's needs. Staff are at the early stages of recording children's progress using learning journals. Children are capable of responding to more difficult tasks in aspects of their learning. Staff across the school understand children's learning needs very well. In most classes, tasks and activities are appropriately planned but some need to be improved to make children think more deeply. Many children are capable of learning at a more challenging level and at a brisker rate. In a few classes, staff provide children with clear explanations and share with them what they are going to learn. This is not yet consistent across the school. Staff need to involve children more in identifying their next steps in learning. Class teachers work very effectively with other staff to help children overcome barriers to their learning. Those children who require additional help are supported well through programmes with appropriate targets and regular reviews of progress.

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

To support children and families, the school links very well with agencies such as health visitors, police, social workers and speech and language therapists. Regular, informative newsletters keep parents up to date with school events. An attractive website provides information about children's achievements. The Parent Council has promoted a number of improvements to the school. Staff use effective partnerships with other local schools to share expertise. The Active School coordinator has extended opportunities for physical activity. The school works well with Pulteneytown People's Project to run a breakfast and after-school club. Parents have appropriate access to the health education resources used by the school. Other helpful partnerships include local businesses and religious organisations.

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

Children take responsibility for a range of school activities but not yet sufficiently for their own learning in class. For example, children are leading the eco group towards a bronze award. Earlier this session staff worked with parents and children to review and update the school's vision and aims. The headteacher monitors teachers' forward plans and gives effective feedback. Together with staff, she tracks and sets targets for children's progress. These targets need to be more ambitious. Staff need to have a much more focused and agreed approach for sharing good practice with each other to improve the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher has undertaken class visits to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. These require to be more focused actions that will lead to improvement. Overall, the school needs to evaluate its work in a more regular and better planned way. This needs to involve all staff, children and their parents.

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

Relationships between staff and children are positive. Children work well with and relate well to each other. Staff have high expectations of children's attendance and behaviour but their expectations of what children can achieve need to be raised. The school promotes children's health and wellbeing very effectively through encouraging healthy eating and increased physical activity. All staff are aware of the school's procedures and their responsibilities in relation to child protection. Children benefit from regular opportunities for religious observance. Staff need to increase the level of awareness among children and parents of the school's effective work in anti-bullying. The school responds well to complaints and staff have put in place procedures to record better how issues have been dealt with.

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

The headteacher knows the children well and has fostered very supportive relationships with parents, families and the wider community. She has managed the falling school roll well, retaining the confidence of both staff and parents. She has been broadly successful in encouraging staff to take on more responsibility for improving learning and teaching. For example, a senior member of staff leads the school's work in literacy. Children lead by taking responsibilities in the pupil council, nutrition group, eco group and as buddies and road safety officers. The headteacher now needs to develop clear and more ambitious plans to improve the school, taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

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

- Improve attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Use information and communications technology more effectively across the curriculum to improve learning.
- Accelerate the planning and preparation for implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improve approaches to self-evaluation involving all stakeholders.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements or recommendations made.

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 South Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	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	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Donald Macleod
8 June 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

If you would like to find out more about our inspections or get an electronic copy of this report, please go to www.hmie.gov.uk.

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation, or if you wish to comment about any aspect of our inspections. You can contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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.

Crown Copyright 2010
HM Inspectorate of Education