

**Integrated Inspection by the  
Care Commission and  
HM Inspectorate of Education of  
St Margaret's Primary School  
Nursery Class and Annexe  
Falkirk Council**

**26 May 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 and education authority. 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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# **Integrated Inspection by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education of St Margaret's Primary School Nursery Class and Annexe Falkirk Council**

## **Introduction**

St Margaret's Primary School Nursery Class and Annexe 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 age three to five years. At the time of the inspection the roll was 100.

## **The environment**

St Margaret's Primary School provided nursery provision over two sites, one based within the school and one in an annexe within Greenpark Community Centre. The accommodation was safe, pleasant, clean and well maintained. Staff had created a warm, caring learning environment and children's work was attractively displayed throughout both sites. Play equipment and resources were clean and in good condition.

Activities were well organised within the playrooms to allow children to play independently or participate in small or large groups. However lack of space restricted some activities. The local authority should review the capacity of the accommodation used by the nursery class located in the school building.

Staff generally took good account of health and safety issues. However, the annexe needed to have at least one member of staff with a first aid certificate, and appropriate fire drill and safety records needed to be maintained.

There were secure enclosed play areas at the rear of both sites for outdoor play. The area at St Margaret's school was small and provided limited opportunities for outdoor play, however, children had access to other areas within the school.

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

Staff in both nursery classes were kind and caring with children. They made good use of praise to acknowledge achievement. Overall staff had a good understanding of children's development and learning. They made some use of questioning to support learning, however, interventions in the school nursery class were not always well timed and staff occasionally missed opportunities to extend children's learning. Staff needed to make more effective use of questioning to encourage children to be more actively involved in their learning. During free play sessions

children were able to exercise choice. However, some activities in the school nursery class were not sufficiently challenging. Arrangements were in place for planning, assessment and recording. Assessment information was gathered but needed to be used more effectively to plan the programme for individuals and groups. Staff compiled folios containing samples of children's work. They should continue to ensure children are fully involved in this process.

Key features of the curriculum included the following.

- The programme for emotional personal and social development was good. Staff encouraged children to be responsible for routine tasks such as tidying toys, preparing snack, and to be independent with personal routines including getting dressed to go outside. Children were happy, confident and secure in the nursery routines. Most were able to share resources and take turns. Staff needed to encourage a few children to play more co-operatively.
- The programme for communication and language was fair. Staff provided some opportunities for children to talk and to listen. Children enjoyed listening to stories and some understood the meaning of author and illustrator. Overall, however, activities were not sufficiently varied to promote more extended conversations with children where they could ask questions, predict and recall events. Staff needed to extend the range of writing tools and materials to provide children with more stimulating activities. Most children could identify their own name and some could write it.
- Overall, the programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Staff made good use of natural materials including sand, water and ice to promote children's understanding of quantity and size. They encouraged children to observe patterns and sequences using a light box. Staff needed to develop the programme further by making fuller use of the local environment to promote children's awareness of the world around them. Children were developing a good knowledge of early number and could name simple shapes and colours.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. In art and craft, staff provided children with good experiences in painting, gluing and collage making. Children enjoyed modelling with dough and printing. Children played well together in a variety of role-play situations including a castle. Children had opportunities to sing and to make music. However, they needed to be supported when using percussion instruments to ensure they were used appropriately.
- The programme for physical development and movement was fair. Staff provided a range of small construction toys and tools to develop children's control of their fingers and hands. Most children used these resources well. Opportunities for energetic outdoor play were limited in the school nursery class. Children would benefit from more access to the school gym where they could develop games skills and confidence in using large play equipment. Staff needed to improve the programme to more effectively promote a sense of health and well-being.

## Support for children and families

Staff were responsive to children's personal, emotional and physical needs. They knew children well and had developed positive relationships with them and their families. The nursery classes received good support from parents. There was a planned programme of parents' evenings, workshops and meetings for new parents. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with most aspects of the work of the nursery. Some parents wanted more information on their child's progress and on how they could work more closely with the nursery to support their children's learning. Staff had good arrangements for introducing children to the P1 class. P1 staff were involved in visits to the nursery to meet nursery staff and children.

Staff needed to develop a clearer knowledge and understanding of procedures for supporting children with special needs. They needed further training to ensure they are able to fully meet children's needs. Staff had developed individual plans for some children. They needed to ensure that they consistently implemented the short term targets outlined in these plans. Meetings with support agencies and other professionals were held regularly to discuss the needs of individual children, when appropriate.

## Management

The headteacher had delegated the responsibility for the management of the nursery classes to the deputy headteacher. However, senior management needed to be more actively involved in the development of the nursery to ensure a commitment to quality improvement. Approaches to self evaluation were well known and staff made use of national advice. However, monitoring and evaluation of the nursery classes needed to be more systematic and rigorous. Training and professional development needed to be given a higher priority. The deputy headteacher should continue to involve the nursery staff in self-evaluation to ensure that the procedures currently in place worked effectively. Staff in both units worked well together and showed commitment to the children.

Policies and procedures had been developed in line with national standards and were accessible to parents and carers. Staff followed the local authority child protection guidelines. Staff needed to revise the way they maintain accident and incident records.

## Key strengths

- The attractive displays of children's work that enhanced the environment.
- Happy, confident children who were settled into nursery routines.
- The positive relationships with parents.
- The warm, caring and committed staff team.

## Recommendations for improvement

- The local authority should review the capacity of the accommodation used by the nursery class located in the school building.
- In the annexe at least one member of staff should have a first aid qualification, and appropriate mechanisms for recording fire drill and safety records should be established.
- Staff should improve the quality of their interventions with children and make more effective use of questioning to enable children to be more actively involved in their learning.
- Staff should further develop their procedures for planning the curriculum and for assessing and recording children's progress.
- Staff should improve aspects of the programmes as described in this report and provide more challenging activities for some children.
- The headteacher should improve the procedures for supporting children with additional needs and provide staff with relevant training as required.
- Senior management should be more actively involved in the nursery classes. They should develop more systematic and rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluation.

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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