

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

22 June 2005

**St Mary's RC Primary School Nursery Class
Gauze Road
Bo'ness
EH51 9QB**

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.

National Care Standard	Child at the Centre Quality Indicator
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 the education authority. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website: www.carecommission.com and HMIE website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report you should write either to the Care Commission or to HM Inspectorate of Education at the address below. If you are still dissatisfied with our services, you can contact your member of the Scottish Parliament (or, if you prefer, any other MSP). You can also contact the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and Agencies.

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Introduction

St Mary's RC Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in March 2005 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 pre-school children aged three to five years. At the time of the inspection the roll was 48.

The environment

Standard 2

The overall quality of the accommodation was very good. It was spacious and welcoming and careful attention was given to health, safety and security matters. Play equipment was in good condition and children's work was attractively displayed throughout the nursery. The outdoor area was fully enclosed and there was ample storage.

Space was used well to provide a range of appropriate activities and children were able to play independently or in larger groups. However, some areas were not as well used as others and adjustments to the layout would improve the quality of use.

Risk assessments were carried out appropriately for relevant nursery procedures. A comprehensive range of policies ensured the care and welfare of children. Staff should improve the system for recording the temperature of the fridge freezer and record temperatures daily.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff had a good understanding of children's development and learning. They had established an inclusive, caring and purposeful learning environment. They knew children well, interacted very positively and had formed very good relationships with them. Staff used praise and encouragement effectively and developed children's confidence and self esteem. Children were happy, secure, interested and concentrated well in play. Staff did not always make enough use of dialogue to extend and challenge children's learning.

Staff planned a broad and balanced range of experiences for children and took good account of children's interests, and of seasonal events. There was a good balance between free and more structured activities. Staff should improve planning to show

more clearly what children were expected to learn. Staff made regular observations of children's progress and used the information to compile useful assessment profiles and folios of children's work. Personal learning plans were being adjusted and further implemented as part of the development plan. Parents had an input into plans and received informative written reports twice a year.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Staff developed children's social skills effectively. Children were becoming aware of the needs of others and were forming friendships. They were cooperative and able to share resources and take turns in activities. Children were secure and relaxed with nursery routines. They were learning about healthy eating and followed rules of hygiene and safety at snack time. Staff developed children's independence well and children were able to dress themselves for outdoors and make choices in play.
- The programme for communication and language was good. Children listened attentively to stories and followed staff instructions well. They conversed ably with staff and each other in play and contributed appropriately to group discussion. Staff encouraged children's interest in books through visits from the librarian, regular story telling and books set out at displays. Improved positioning of the story corner and a wider selection of reading materials would be of benefit. Children used name labels for art and enjoyed using magnetic letters in a writing area. Staff valued and displayed children's early writing. However, children needed additional early reading and writing materials and better activities to challenge them and increase their interest in writing.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Staff developed children's awareness of early mathematics well. Children recognised simple shapes and number in a computer game and used mathematical language appropriately in play. Staff provided very good resources for children to use their senses. There were good opportunities for children to learn about seasons, the weather, days of the week, planting and a range of cultures. Staff organised interesting visitors to the nursery such as the police and fire service to extend children's knowledge of community personnel. There were limited outings into the local environment. Children explored torches, magnets and magnifiers. However, they needed more materials to use with these and access to natural materials to investigate and explore.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Children used the home corner well for role-play. They used a good range of technology in the area. A wider range of literacy materials would help extend play. Staff provided a good range of art activities and materials including painting, collage, printing and drawing. Additional surfaces were needed to encourage children to be creative and express their own ideas. Children had independent access to musical instruments and space to respond to taped music.

A few children used this area. They had regular opportunities for singing and action rhymes.

- The programme for physical development and movement was very good. The enclosed outdoor area was used regularly for a range of activities. Children were developing skills such as running, balancing, riding bicycles, and throwing and catching. They also took part in weekly gym sessions. They were developing coordination skills and an awareness of space. Children used physical play equipment in the playroom independently. Staff took children on seasonal walks in the school grounds. Children were developing hand control using construction materials, play dough tools, pens, puzzles and scissors.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

There was good support for children and families. The management team and staff had formed very good relationships with children and parents. They were sensitive and responsive to their differing needs and circumstances. Parents received useful information about the nursery and health and community matters through the handbook, regular newsletters and notice boards. Story sacks and library books were available for parents to use at home with children. Parents helped in sessions, with the library and with fund raising. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very satisfied with nursery provision.

There were good arrangements for children entering the nursery or moving into P1. Introductory information, prior visits and flexible settling helped children start nursery. Familiarisation with primary school facilities and staff, visits to the P1 class, contact with the P1 teacher and parents' meetings enabled a smooth transition to primary. Information was shared with parents, staff and other agencies involved with children requiring additional support with their learning. Individualised educational plans had been put in place and regular reviews were held to support children's development. The school was continuing to develop links with parents, other provision and personnel from other agencies as part of their development plan.

Management

Standard 14

The leadership of the nursery was good. The headteacher was approachable and supported staff and nursery developments well. Since August, the principal teacher had line management responsibility for the nursery. She oversaw plans and had begun to make monitoring visits. The roles and responsibilities of the headteacher and principal teacher in relation to the nursery now needed to be more clearly established. There were very good relations between the management team and staff. The communication systems in place were good but informal. More formal systems needed to be implemented by the management team and should include all nursery staff. The nursery teacher had day-to-day responsibility and led the nursery effectively. She was well supported by the committed early years officers and all worked effectively together as a team. A staff development and review system was in place and staff had access to education authority training courses to develop their skills further.

There was a range of sound curriculum and administrative policies to help ensure clarity and consistency in practice. Staff were aware of relevant child protection procedures. The headteacher was made aware of the role of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice.

A nursery development plan identified appropriate priorities and was being fully implemented to improve the service. However, the current systems for monitoring and evaluating the service should be formalised and extended. The management team should improve their self-evaluation procedures and ensure all staff, parents and children, where appropriate, have the opportunity to contribute to this process.

Key strengths

- The spacious and welcoming accommodation and the inclusive, caring and purposeful learning environment.
- Staff knowledge of children and the positive interaction between staff and children.
- The very good programmes in emotional, personal and social development, and physical development and movement.
- The very good and supportive relations between and among the management team and nursery staff, and with children and parents.
- The comprehensive range of policies and procedures to ensure children's care and welfare and consistent playroom practice.
- The leadership of the nursery teacher, the commitment of the early years officers and their effective teamwork.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

Action had been taken on all the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should further improve the quality and challenge of children's learning.
- The principal teacher and staff should develop planning further to show more clearly what children are expected to learn.
- The management team should review and clarify their roles and responsibilities and those of staff, and improve communication procedures in the nursery.

- The headteacher should further improve self-evaluation procedures and include all staff, parents and children appropriately.

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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