



**St Ninian's RC Primary  
School and Nursery Class  
Dundee City Council  
27 April 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, children and the local community know whether their school<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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.

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

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The school**

St Ninian's RC Primary School is a denominational school with a nursery class. It serves Menzieshill and surrounding areas of Dundee. The roll was 197, including 37 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in February 2010. Children's attendance was below the national average in 2008/2009. Around a quarter of children do not have English as their first language.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- Confident children who express themselves well and who are learning to be responsible.
- Approaches to improving children's health and wellbeing.
- A positive, caring environment for learning and personal development.
- The celebration of cultural diversity and promotion of citizenship.

## **3. How well do children learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

Children in the nursery learn through a wide range of stimulating activities. They respond well to questions which make them think. They offer opinions on their learning. They learn in a calm and purposeful environment. Almost all children in the primary classes are very positive about their school. They feel safe and fairly treated by staff. Most children are highly motivated during lessons and when involved in the wider life of the school. They work well independently and in pairs and groups. In most classes, they take responsibility for assessing their own and each other's work. This approach to assessment is most effective when children are clear about how to recognise success. In a few classes, children understand very well how learning activities help them to develop important skills and attributes for the future. Children are enthusiastic about learning using information and communications technology (ICT). Those in P5 are increasing their skills by completing and submitting homework through the national *Glow* network.

Children's achievements beyond the classroom are extensive. Almost all children try new sports confidently and respond to challenges eagerly. A large number increase their self-esteem and achieve success through involvement in the school choir and instrumental groups. Those who represent the school at local and national level do well. Children talk proudly of their achievements. Their sound knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles is increased through a rich variety of health promotion initiatives. All children in the primary classes take part in at least two hours of good-quality physical education each week. Nursery classes would benefit from more energetic physical activity.

Children in the nursery are making very good progress in their early development of literacy and numeracy. Most listen well to staff and to each other. They can sustain lengthy conversations without losing interest. Almost all have made a promising start to early reading but need more opportunities to develop writing. Almost all children in the primary stages attain appropriate levels in listening, talking and reading. Most achieve these levels in writing and mathematics. Children with additional support needs are making suitable progress towards their individual targets. Children learning English as an additional language make very good progress and achieve well in the school. From P1 to P7, children listen attentively to stories and presentations from their teachers and their peers. During group and class discussions most children are keen to share their views and they respond to questions confidently. Children's reading is strong across the school. They talk in detail about books and stories they have read and enjoyed. Older children share their enthusiasm for books by reading to younger ones. Although most children can write well for a range of purposes by the end of P7, staff at all stages need to plan for long-term progression in writing more effectively. In mathematics, children use their skills to interpret information accurately and create a range of charts and graphs. They have a good grasp of shape and position. They are less secure in mental calculations and applying strategies for solving mathematical problems.

## Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery classes, children learn through a broad curriculum firmly based on active play. Staff plan activities which build on children's interests. They make effective use of the outdoor area to encourage curiosity and develop investigative skills. Children's literacy and numeracy skills are improved through the range of high-quality, engaging picture books. Staff use these well to involve children in talking and counting activities. The primary curriculum is broad and balanced. It is extended through many out-of-class learning opportunities. Good examples of these opportunities include theatre trips, a P7 residential experience, sports events, school shows and lunchtime clubs. Children engage in enterprise learning and raise funds for local and national charities. Through their link with a school in Uganda, children are increasing their knowledge of issues in the wider world, including social inequalities. Staff have recently begun to improve literacy by using *Curriculum for Excellence* guidance. Whole-school projects on Africa and Burns create meaningful opportunities for staff to bring different aspects of children's learning together. A few staff have successfully introduced this interdisciplinary approach to lessons. Some teachers have yet to adopt these sound approaches. They still deliver too much learning using worksheets. Whilst the current curriculum covers all key areas and provides well for most children, it lacks appropriate coherence, depth, challenge and progression to meet children's needs fully.

Staff meet children's emotional and behavioural needs very well. In the nursery classes, children are well supported by caring staff who are familiar with children's strengths and needs. Circle time activities are skilfully adapted to develop the talking skills of children who are learning English. Across the primary stages, most learning activities are appropriately matched to children's varying needs and abilities. A few staff need to provide more challenging tasks for different groups of children. Children with additional needs are very well supported by teachers and specialist staff who plan suitable targets to help focus learning. The targets are reviewed regularly.

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

Staff involve parents in a number of initiatives which support children's learning. Nursery staff welcome parents into the learning environment during regular 'come and see' sessions. Information leaflets give parents of children in the primary classes helpful information about environmental studies topics. Learning diaries keep them informed about homework and school events. A few staff use them to communicate helpful detail about children's successes and learning needs. Parents would like all staff to do this. The school has strong links with the wider parish community which readily supports the school. Children take an active role in regular worship. They are well supported during times of sacramental preparation. Children benefit from staff's positive relationships with a wide range of other agencies. A good example of this is the partnership working with educational psychology staff. This has helped to improve approaches to behaviour management across the school. Staff are creative in developing links with other community partners which further extend children's learning. Visits to the local botanical gardens and observatory, for example, enhance the quality of learning for children.

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

Many children take on roles of responsibility eagerly. This enables them to make their school better. The pupil council is actively involved in school decisions. All staff and children recently contributed to a review of the school vision and aims. Using *Glow*, everyone took part in the election of head boy and head girl. The school community has achieved the Eco-Schools Scotland bronze award and a health promotion silver award. Almost all staff demonstrate a commitment to evaluating and improving their work but this is not yet having sufficient impact across the school. All staff now need to make stronger contributions to improvement. Senior staff use a range of effective approaches to gather views and identify the school's strengths and

aspects for development. The current focus on literacy is beginning to have a positive impact on improving children's writing. A few staff take a lead role in moving the school forward but, to ensure the smooth implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*, they all need to do so.

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

All children respond well to teachers' high expectations of children's behaviour and commitment to learning. Since the introduction of 'green day' activities as a reward for positive effort, the challenging behaviour of a few children has improved notably. Staff should consider how high standards of presentation across all aspects of children's work might be similarly encouraged. Strong Catholic values are at the heart of school life. Within this community of faith the cultural diversity of the school is valued and celebrated. Children know the importance of understanding other beliefs and traditions. Their understanding of equalities is strong. Children are motivated by the wide range of praise used by staff. All staff are fully aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding children. Their commitment to children's care and welfare is exemplary.

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

The headteacher has a very strong commitment to the school. She is held in high regard by staff, children, parents and the wider community. She firmly believes that all children are valuable members of the community with a right to maximise their potential. Aply supported by the depute headteacher, she challenges and supports staff to help them improve learning and teaching. She values the views of parents and other partners. The curriculum needs to be improved, building on the many positive aspects of children's learning experiences. With increased strategic direction from the headteacher, staff need to share good practice more effectively. With these aspects addressed, we are confident the school has the capacity to improve.

## 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 the curriculum taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improve self-evaluation so that it leads to consistently high-quality teaching and learning which meets learning needs.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement which is being 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 St Ninian's RC Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>good</b>

Nursery class

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Children's experiences</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>

**HM Inspector:** Patricia Watson  
27 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](http://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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