



**St Patrick's RC Primary
School and Nursery Class
Denny
Falkirk Council
24 March 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these 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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

² Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school

St Patrick's Primary School is a denominational school with a nursery class. The nursery opened in August 2008, at the start of the current school session. The school serves the areas of Denny, Dunipace and Banknock, situated west of Falkirk. The roll was 275, including 37 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in February 2009. The school has an enhanced provision facility, which currently caters for 21 children with additional support needs from across the local authority. Pupil's attendance was in line with the national average in 2006/2007.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, motivated, confident children who take a great pride in their school.
- The successful approach to including children with additional support needs in the life and work of the school.
- A strong, caring ethos with staff who work well together to support the children and one another.
- Approaches to developing children's independence within the nursery.

3. Example of good practice

- Effective partnership working between school staff and the speech therapist and the positive impact of this on children's achievement.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children enjoy being in the nursery class and are making good progress. They respond well to saying rhymes and listening to stories. Most children can recognise their own name with support, and are developing an interest in writing letters. Almost all children are confident when counting to five and many can count beyond this number. They are developing well through play their understanding of time and measurement. They are successful at forming friendships

with others and are learning to play together. Children are developing independence in their learning.

Across the primary stages, children are keen to learn. They enjoy the increasing opportunities to be more active in their learning. They work well in groups to discuss ideas, and to develop and display their knowledge. Most children can explain the purpose of lessons. They are developing their skills in reviewing their progress against learning targets set by their teachers. In a few classes, children are becoming more confident in commenting on each other's work and on how to improve. Children with additional support needs work well with staff to produce a very helpful record of their progress over the week, which they give to parents. Children are achieving success in their learning both in and outside the classroom. In their "Scottish Week", during the inspection, children successfully recited Burns poetry, displayed dancing skills and in many classes presented their good knowledge of Scotland. The school has achieved its Eco-Schools Scotland green flag and health promoting school status. Children across the school display good knowledge and enthusiasm in both these important areas. Children participate in a wide range of school clubs, gaining additional skills in, for example, playing guitar, speaking French and playing football. They are also developing important skills as responsible citizens. Several are active members of the pupil council, the eco committee, or the health committee. Many act as buddies or take on roles as playground leaders, and all children raise funds for local and international charities.

Overall, children are making good progress in reading, writing, listening, talking and mathematics. Levels of attainment have been increasing steadily in recent years, with a good number of children exceeding expected national levels. Children with additional support needs are making good progress in achieving learning targets in their individualised programmes. Children enjoy reading and most can talk well about favourite authors and why they like their books. Most are developing their writing skills well and produce good pieces for the school magazine. At the upper stages, children are not writing enough extended pieces of work. In mathematics, children are developing and

applying their skills well across other areas of their learning. For example, children in P7 carried out a recycling survey and used computers to produce graphs of the results. Most children have an appropriate understanding of number, money and measurement. They can apply problem-solving skills effectively.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children in the nursery are offered a broad and attractive curriculum. Staff encourage an interest in numeracy and literacy during play. Staff have still to achieve an effective balance between children's independent learning and their own role in guiding children's learning. The school is working to address the need for more outdoor learning to support children's physical development. Across the primary stages, teachers plan effectively to help children develop their skills in a progressive way. In line with national advice in *Curriculum for Excellence*, staff have made a good start in helping children to make good links across their learning. For example, children are developing their literacy and information and communications technology skills in a topic about World War II, and studying science through fieldwork related to the local river. They are also developing enterprise skills through a wide range of planned projects. Children with additional support needs are learning effectively in mainstream classes. They also benefit from some time working in small groups to focus on developing their language and communication skills. The school is aware of the need to keep under constant review the balance of the timetable for children with additional support needs to ensure that their learning activities are appropriate. Children at all stages do not yet participate in enough planned high quality physical education each week.

In the nursery class, staff meet the needs of children well. Activities and resources selected help children make good progress. Children who need some extra help with their learning receive sensitive support. Staff are aware of the need to extend their use of observation of children to ensure that all are being sufficiently challenged. At the

primary stages, most teachers have a good knowledge of individual children and are meeting their varied learning needs well. They give clear explanations and use questions appropriately to check children's understanding. They make good use of praise to encourage children. Some tasks set in whole-class lessons are too difficult for some children while not providing enough challenge for others. Closer monitoring of children's progress is required to ensure that their learning needs are being addressed properly. Classroom teachers and staff in the enhanced provision work well together to identify and plan individual programmes for children with additional support needs. Staff in the enhanced provision and the support for learning teacher provide very effective targeted support which is helping individual children make good progress in their learning. The experienced support staff play important roles in, and outwith the classroom in meeting children's additional support needs. The depute headteacher coordinates and monitors effectively the support provision for children.

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

Staff work well with parents to involve them in their children's learning. Parents have welcomed new initiatives like 'Meet the Teacher' evenings, children-led curricular information events and new approaches to homework. Parents of children with additional support needs are involved in regular meetings to review their child's progress. Speech and language specialists, home family support workers and other partners in external agencies provide good additional support. Links with local employers and services such as the police and fire service are helping to make children's learning more interesting and meaningful. Partnerships with St Modan's High School are particularly good. Children enjoy interesting learning experiences in the High School over the course of P6 and P7 as they prepare for transfer to S1. Effective arrangements are also in place to support children moving from nursery to P1. The school is good at dealing with complaints from parents, children and other members of the community.

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

Children talk proudly about their school and feel their views are taken seriously. Through the pupil council, the eco and health committees, children can see the changes they have helped bring about by achieving the green flag and health promoting school status. Children at the upper stages have been consulted about lunchtime activities and more recently about improving the new system for recording learning targets. The school is aware of the need to involve children more in improving their learning. Staff are committed to the school and to improving learning experiences for children. Most are receptive to new ideas and engage regularly in professional dialogue about improving learning and teaching. They work well with the headteacher to identify and plan changes and volunteer readily to be members of working groups to take forward agreed developments. New approaches to learning, for example in introducing cooperative learning strategies and new programmes in reading are helping children to achieve more. Staff have worked particularly well to establish the new nursery and provide an effective early learning environment in a short time.

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

Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and celebrate their achievements well. Children respond well and show respect for staff and care and consideration for one another. The school has a very inclusive ethos, with all children learning important lessons about tolerance and acceptance of differences. Effective work with two local primary schools on anti-sectarianism is further helping children to respect and understand other faiths and ideas. Children talked knowledgeably, for example, about their visit to a local mosque. They are supported in developing in their faith by good links with the local parish priest and through religious observance at services and daily prayers. Staff are alert to children's emotional needs and have a clear awareness of issues surrounding child protection. They provide high

quality pastoral care. The school has recently introduced a project to support more vulnerable children. Children feel safe and cared for and think the school deals very well with any incidents of bullying.

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

The headteacher is clearly committed to ongoing improvement in the school. She has worked hard with the depute headteacher to promote the right climate for effective self-evaluation to take place. She is also well supported by the hardworking principal teacher. Together they have put in place measures to monitor the work of the school. Staff need to use information gathered to evaluate more rigorously the impact on children's learning. They need to continue to share good practice and support one another in becoming more skilled at reflecting on their own classroom practice. Staff should continue to extend the role of children and parents in evaluating the work of the school. There is much good practice upon which to build and the school is well placed to improve further.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that 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 following 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.

- Further develop approaches to self-evaluation with a clearer focus on improving learning outcomes for children.
- Continue to develop approaches to ensure that children have more opportunities for taking a greater degree of responsibility for their learning.
- The school should work towards ensuring all children have sufficient high-quality physical education each week.

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 Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary School

Improvements in performance	good
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: Mairi Timmons
31 March 2009

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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses