



**St Stephen's Primary
School
Clydebank
West Dunbartonshire
Council
24 February 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 Stephen's Primary School is a denominational school. It serves the Dalmuir area of Clydebank. The roll was 211 when the inspection was carried out in December 2008. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2006/2007.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The outstanding ethos with staff and children working together.
- Children who are very eager to learn.
- Staff teamwork and commitment to their vision of how the school wants to serve its community.
- The ways in which the school works together with parents to support children's learning and development.
- The ways in which the school helps children to understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
- The headteacher and the depute headteacher's leadership for learning, including the ways in which they have enabled staff and children to lead school improvements.

3. Examples of good practice

- The roles of teachers and specialist staff in meeting learning needs of pupils with additional support needs. The ways in which class teachers work with learning assistants to take a lead role in developing support for learning plans and programmes.
- Arrangements which foster good staff team-working, including continuing professional development linked to the school's identified priorities for improvement.
- The school's approaches to developing children's knowledge and understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are learning very well and achieving success both in and beyond the classroom. They really enjoy learning together on activities that give them confidence and let them take responsibility. Children at all stages plan and organise events, for example to raise money for charity. They take part confidently in public performances such as school concerts and assemblies. They learn new skills in after school activities, such as Spanish, or cheerleading. Children feel safe, respected and included in the life of the school. They make thoughtful and helpful contributions to make things better, for example, by suggesting ideas for the school to learn about together on *Focus Fridays*.

Most children at all stages are making good progress in their learning. Over the last few years the school has improved attainment in reading and writing and maintained high standards of attainment in mathematics. Children have well developed skills in talking and

listening. They speak with enthusiasm about the ways in which they have learned to keep safe and healthy. They write well for a range of purposes, including a funny and well informed script for a short animated film on *The Titan Crane*, a link to the local tradition of shipbuilding. Children respond well to varied opportunities to solve mathematical problems and handle information in a range of forms using numbers and graphs. Their skills in mental mathematics and aspects of measurement need to be further developed. Younger children are increasingly active in their learning. At all stages children are working together with their teachers to set targets to help them take the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school has made well planned changes to the curriculum. Children work on more relevant, challenging and enjoyable tasks that help them to be creative and learn to think for themselves. Teachers are carefully using advice in the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are creating good opportunities for children to use their skills in English language and mathematics in other areas of their learning, for example in history and science. Children are developing a good understanding of money in well planned lessons on financial education. They learn about other people's beliefs in religious education. Children's personal, social and citizenship skills are developing very well. Most children are confident and articulate. All children have sufficient opportunity to take part in high quality physical activity. At P7, children encourage younger children to make healthy choices at lunch and snack times.

Staff know children in their classes and groups very well. They provide very well for most of their learning needs. All staff work closely with groups and individuals and children are keen to learn. Most activities are set at the appropriate level. A few children are asked to complete work that is too easy for them. Teachers do not always make sure tasks and activities help all children make progress from what they already know and can do. Children with additional support needs are very well supported. They, and their parents, are involved

in reviewing their children's progress and in planning next steps in their learning. The school is very good at identifying and meeting their needs. Children concentrate well and most are very good at working together. Teachers engage very well with children in their learning. They clearly set out what children will learn in each lesson and ask questions that help children think for themselves. They use information and communications technology (ICT) well to interest children. Children use ICT confidently, for example to learn French vocabulary. Across the school, teachers set appropriate homework.

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

Teachers work very well with a wide range of visiting specialists and health professionals. These include educational psychologists, social workers, and police, the Active Schools coordinator, cultural coordinator and music motivator and young people from the associated secondary school. Through these partnerships, the school provides a wider range of activities and events which help children learn how to play and work together, for example in teams and musical groups. The school has also used its very successful partnerships with experts in the media, performing arts and industry to help children learn about engineering technology and perform music for professional recording. Teachers have developed good working partnerships with parents. Almost all parents feel they are well informed about their children's progress through helpful reports and meetings. Staff at the early stages work closely with nursery staff to ensure children are supported in beginning school. Teachers at the upper stages, together with staff from the associated secondary schools, help children make the move to S1. The school is good at sorting out complaints made by children, parents and other members of the community.

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

Children are very proud of their school and the part they play in helping to improve what it does. They are successful in taking on a wide range of responsibilities. Members of the pupil council have also been trained to be play leaders. A few children are junior road safety officers and others take turns to be lunchtime helpers. Children at all stages contributed ideas to school programmes of learning on health and wellbeing. Children in P6 run the school's Credit Union which helps children of all ages understand the value of saving up money. Staff are highly motivated and work very well together to plan improvements and provide consistently high quality learning for children. They also consult with and involve parents in working groups, for example planning to improve homework activities. There are clear links between planned improvements and children's learning and achievement, for example in the planning for improvement in writing.

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

All children are valued by staff. Children are very polite and very well behaved. Almost all are attentive and work well. They are very caring to one another. There are very good links with the local parish. In keeping with the school's Roman Catholic status, the local parish clergy work closely with staff and the school community regularly attend Mass. Staff take very good care of children, who feel listened to, and well cared for in school. All staff are confident in their knowledge of child protection procedures. All staff work together to encourage children to work as well as they can at all times. The school recognises the range of children's achievements in various ways, including its TOPS assembly which takes every opportunity to praise success. It has good procedures to monitor and encourage children's attendance at school. The school has secure entry for visitors. It is accessible by people with restricted mobility.

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

The school has clear aims and values that place effective learning for all children at the core of its work. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and provides a strong lead to staff, pupils and parents. She also supports others to take the lead in improving the school, for example by leading working groups. She is successful in enlisting the active and sustained involvement of a wide range of partners, including parents, to support very effectively the work of the school. She works very closely together with the depute head to help everyone to play their part in helping the school support and care for all its children. As a result, the school provides a very good quality of education. Staff have worked closely with pupils and parents to decide what the school does well, as well as what need to be improved. The school is ready to improve further and is very well placed to take forward its development of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the quality of self-evaluation leading to improvement in the school, we disengaged early from the inspection. We will make no further visits following this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

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

- Continue to maintain current high levels of commitment to further develop provision of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Ensure that all tasks and activities meet all children's learning needs by building more effectively on children's prior learning both in and beyond school.

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 Stephen's Primary School.

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	good

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

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector:Alistair Kirkwood
24 February 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

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