



**Wallacestone Primary
School and Nursery Class
Brightons
Falkirk Council
2 February 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² 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. 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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

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

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Wallacestone Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the villages of Brightons, Reddingmuirhead, Wallacestone and the lower part of Rumford, near Polmont. The roll was 565, including 86 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in November 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, articulate, well-behaved children and their involvement in improving the school.
- The positive vision and values of the whole school community.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leadership at all levels and staff contributions to improving the school.
- The impact of self-evaluation activities in improving learning experiences for children.

3. Examples of good practice

- The impact of continuous professional development on leadership roles.
- Improving approaches to homework.
- Developing children's citizenship skills.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school and nursery, children are very well motivated and engaged in their learning. They feel safe and happy, and are proud of

their many achievements. Children are developing excellent citizenship skills through their involvement and communication with schools in several different countries. They also learn about different cultures and raise money for charity through engaging with the travels of their school mascot, 'Angus'. Enterprise is an important aspect of school life and each class takes responsibility for organising projects. For example, P6 held a very successful ceilidh as part of the school's Homecoming week. Children are developing a very good range of healthy living and physical skills by taking part in the numerous after-school clubs, including cheerleading, dance and gardening. Across the school, at all stages, children are engaged in active, purposeful activities. They talk with enthusiasm about learning. Children work together very well, for example to discuss ideas, solve problems, and create displays. They would benefit from further involvement in identifying next steps in their learning and setting personal targets for improving their work.

Across the school and nursery, children achieve very well in different areas of learning. In the nursery class, most children are confident in using art and craft materials and can create detailed and imaginative models and paintings. In science, they are learning about the properties of natural and manufactured materials. At the primary stages, children are developing skills in music and are learning to play tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments. At all stages, children are developing appropriate skills and enhancing their learning by using information and communications technology. For example, some classes are involved in blogging about school life.

In the nursery class, children are developing their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing very well. Most older children can express their opinions confidently in front of a large group. Nursery children are developing their early mathematical skills very effectively, for example by comparing sizes of objects. As part of the school's Homecoming week, they had learned about Scottish customs and were confidently dancing to Scottish music. Across the primary stages, children are making excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment is continuing to improve. Almost all children

achieve appropriate national levels and a majority achieve them earlier than might normally be expected. Almost all children listen particularly well and confidently share their ideas during discussion. They work exceptionally well in groups and are skilled at taking on different roles. At the early stages, children read with increasing confidence and fluency. They enjoy reading and are able to make links to other areas of the curriculum. By P7, children are very skilled in discussing texts and in researching and presenting information. Across the school, children write very well for different purposes and are making very good progress. At the upper stages, they produce pieces of very high quality writing, often of a good length. Almost all children are achieving or exceeding appropriate national levels in mathematics and are very secure in all aspects. By P7, children are confident in talking about how to solve problems and can describe different strategies for tackling mental calculations. Across the school, children handle data very well and older ones can use spreadsheets and databases extremely effectively to display information.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff in the nursery and primary classes have made a very good start to implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. Nursery staff provide a broad range of experiences for all children, based on learning through play. Staff are responsive to children's interests and plan activities accordingly. They should continue to work on developing children's outdoor learning experiences. At the primary stages, children benefit from a balanced and well-planned curriculum which extends their depth and breadth of learning. Staff plan carefully to ensure the content of lessons is relevant and builds on what the children already know. All children from P1 to P7 are learning to speak French and all benefit from the input of specialist teaching in Scots language. Literacy is taught across the curriculum and children benefit from a clear purpose and audience for reading and writing activities. The school recognises that it could now usefully extend this approach to mathematics. Physical education is of very good quality but children are not yet benefitting from two hours of this each week.

Across the school and nursery, staff know children very well and are sensitive to their learning needs. They make classrooms interesting places to learn and plan high-quality lessons. Tasks and activities are at the right level of difficulty for almost all children. The school's recent focus on developing homework has led to varied and creative ways of supporting learning at home. Children and teachers use technology very well to support learning, including interactive whiteboards. Teachers work very effectively with partner agencies and pupil support assistants to provide a high quality of support for children experiencing difficulties with their learning. These children are making very good progress towards meeting their personal targets for learning. The school should continue to seek creative ways of assisting children with additional learning needs.

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

Various external agencies work very effectively with the school to support children's learning. There are very productive partnerships with, for example, psychological services and speech and language therapists. The school's Active Schools coordinator works very well with the school to plan and deliver joint initiatives which benefit children's health and wellbeing. Commendably, the school involves these agencies in evaluating the effectiveness of its work. There are strong partnerships with parents, and the Parent Council and parent association both give considerable support to the school. The school keeps parents very well informed through regular newsletters, parents' meetings, curriculum workshops and the school website. It regularly asks parents and others for feedback and opinions and deals well with any complaints. Parents are consulted about sensitive health education issues. Some are directly involved in shaping school improvement through their involvement in the school improvement committee. Children take responsibility for organising open afternoons to tell parents about their learning achievements. Very good arrangements are in place to support children moving from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Braes High school.

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

Children and staff play the central role in improving their school community. Everyone is involved and feels part of the process. Children have an outstanding range of opportunities to take responsibility. These include serving on the school's improvement planning team and playground committee, and carrying out 'eco' work. Children take their leadership roles seriously. All P7 children have additional duties and carry them out confidently. Staff are highly committed and involved in school improvement. They have found innovative ways to share good practice, including regular breakfast discussion groups. They benefit from high-quality staff development sessions which enrich children's learning. For example, recent training in the use of 'Thinking Hats' has led to children discussing their own learning styles and applying new ones. The school has a very effective range of approaches to monitoring and evaluating its work. As a result, learning in all classes has become much more active and children are using their literacy skills well across the curriculum. All teachers play a key role in developing learning through leading and participating in working groups. The management team checks the quality of the school's work in a number of very effective ways, including regular 'learning walks' around the school. With this approach, the school is particularly well placed to maintain and extend its very high quality of provision.

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

Across the school, children are confident in all aspects of their learning and development. They are very proud of their successes and achievements as learners and good citizens. Staff set high standards for learning and behaviour and children in turn behave with courtesy and respect. Children report that they feel valued and that they are treated equally. The school has sound procedures in place to make

sure children are happy, including a committee that helps to ensure they have positive experiences in the playground. Staff are confident in their knowledge of child protection procedures. The school encourages children to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Nursery children, for example, are encouraged to prepare healthy snacks and make appropriate choices. Children learn about other religions and cultures as part of their religious education programme.

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

Leadership at all levels across the school is very strong. The headteacher manages change skilfully and provides staff with a clear direction and purpose. She identifies and nurtures individual talents amongst the staff and this leads to a positive culture where everyone feels valued. She is very well supported by a deputy headteacher and three principal teachers. The remits of promoted staff are well focused on the continuous improvement of learning experiences for children. All staff demonstrate an exceptionally high level of commitment and expertise and help to ensure the school is continually improving.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with 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 school.

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

- Increase children's involvement in setting targets for their learning.
- Continue developing the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements or recommendations.

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 Wallacestone Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	excellent

HM Inspector: Carole McKenzie
2 February 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 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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