



**Auchterhouse Primary
School and Nursery Class
Angus Council
11 January 2011**

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.

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

Auchterhouse Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves Kirkton of Auchterhouse and the surrounding area. The roll was 55, including 9 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in November 2010. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The ethos of inclusion and the mutual support children give each other.
- Opportunities for children to develop their confidence, personal skills and achievement.
- Provision for children who need additional support.
- The school's partnership with parents and the local community which supports children's learning.
- The quality of children's experiences in the nursery.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are happy and settled in the nursery. They enjoy making their own choices about where to play and cooperate very well with each other. At the primary stages, children are enthusiastic learners who work well independently and in groups. Their skills are further developed through a wide range of learning opportunities outwith the classroom. Older children are developing leadership skills through working with younger children. At all stages, children make choices about what they would like to learn in some lessons. Older children need to be given more frequently challenging tasks which are less directed by the teacher. Most children are ready to take more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers need to help them to do this by ensuring that they clearly understand their achievements and next steps.

Children are achieving well. Those in the nursery class use their planning skills well to organise special events for their parents. They take responsibility on the eco committee and understand why recycling is important. They use digital cameras and computers confidently. Children across the primary stages also have well developed information and communications technology (ICT) skills. They understand what they need to do to stay healthy. Their scientific investigations have won them a “Crest Award”. Working with their community to achieve an Eco-schools (Scotland) Green Flag has developed children’s understanding of the issues affecting their local and global environment. The Local Authority Electoral Officer and MSP helped them to organise democratic pupil council elections. Children confidently ask important questions about current world events and religion.

Children are attaining well. Those in the nursery class enjoy looking at books and making up their own stories. They use questions very well to develop their thinking. Most children use their numeracy skills to help with nursery routines and a few can use fractions to share. Across the primary stages, most children attain appropriate levels in reading, writing, listening, talking and mathematics. The school has sustained these levels over a long period of time. Children are capable of achieving higher standards in writing. By the upper stages, children can read fluently and with expression. They recognise the importance of the Scots language within their heritage. Children apply their reading skills well when carrying out personal research. They need more opportunities to develop their skills in extended writing. Across the school almost all children have appropriate skills in mental calculation. Children at the early stages use models well to help them to work out unfamiliar mathematical problems and there is scope to build further on these skills as children get older.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class and across the primary stages, staff provide a broad curriculum linked closely to *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are beginning to plan more collaboratively with each other to ensure continuous progress in children's learning from stage to stage. Parents and children also have a very active role in shaping the curriculum. The school has a strong focus on giving children opportunities for personal achievement. Interdisciplinary projects help children to work in mixed-age groups to develop their team working, literacy and numeracy skills and make connections across their learning. Children experience two hours of high-quality physical education each week. The school has very effective curricular partnerships with the local community which make learning meaningful to real life.

In the nursery and across the primary stages, staff know children and their families very well and meet their learning needs very effectively. Activities are well matched to children's interests and children are involved in planning many aspects of their learning. Children are given opportunities to progress at their own pace. Staff interact very well with children to help them think things through and persevere in their learning. Staff monitor children's progress closely. They work with the visiting support for learning teacher to provide support when required. Arrangements for meeting the needs of those children who need additional support with their learning are outstanding. Staff work closely with parents and a wide range of partner agencies to plan children's learning. They adapt the curriculum and use community resources imaginatively to capture children's interest and help them to make very good progress towards personal learning goals.

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

The school works very well with others to support children's learning. It plays a key role within the local community. The school has very

positive links with a range of local businesses and community groups which enrich learning experiences. Parents are very happy with the school. They praise the school's open and responsive culture. Regular learning evenings help parents to participate in the curriculum. The active parent council gathers the views of parents using questionnaires. The headteacher always responds to parents' views and uses these to shape provision.

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

Staff, children and their parents are actively involved in improving the school, to very good effect. The school has rigorous approaches to monitoring standards and making improvements. Consultation with parents and children is particularly strong and effective in improving learning. Staff in the nursery and primary stages are strongly committed to ongoing improvement. They are fully involved in almost all aspects of school improvement. Nursery staff are beginning to carry out shared improvement work with other establishments. The headteacher tracks each child's achievements closely. He monitors teaching, learning and children's work and helps staff to develop their skills.

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

The school has high expectations of all children. It has a very positive climate and inclusive approaches which are outstanding. Learning through example, children are developing very positive attitudes to equality and fairness in their community. They are extremely caring and they regularly put others before themselves when they have opportunities to make choices. Staff in the nursery and across the school treat children with dignity and respect. They have high expectations of children's engagement, attendance and behaviour. The school has appropriate arrangements for religious observance and a strong partnership with the local church.

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

The school has a clear sense of direction, and strong sense of purpose. The headteacher knows the school well and has a clear understanding of the community it serves. He has established a shared vision for an inclusive school with a caring and nurturing climate. In particular he has made strong progress in embedding opportunities for children to develop their capacities through a wider range of learning opportunities. He has worked closely with the relatively new teaching and support staff to build an effective team. He has applied his own knowledge well to model effective teaching approaches and support staff to implement *Curriculum for Excellence*.

8. 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 schools.

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

- Develop regular and challenging opportunities for pupils to be independent in and responsible for their own learning.
- Continue to develop opportunities for children to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in practical and real life situations across the curriculum.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation, which had been 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 Auchterhouse Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	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	very good

Managing Inspector: Jacqueline Sinclair
11 January 2011

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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