



**Balhousie Primary School  
and Nursery Class  
Perth and Kinross Council  
16 December 2008**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school<sup>1</sup>. 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 parents<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

<sup>2</sup> 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**

Balhouses Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the south Muirton and Balhouses areas of Perth. The inspection was carried out in October 2008 at which time the roll was 128, including 25 children in the nursery. Pupils' attendance was above the national average in 2006/07.

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

- The welcoming ethos of the school and the work of all staff to meet the needs of vulnerable children.
- The development of children's self confidence and wider achievements.
- Effective arrangements for working in partnership with parents and families.
- The headteacher's clear vision for the further improvement of the school.

## **3. Example of good practice**

- The success of the school in involving parents in the life and work of the school.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

In the nursery class, most children can recognise their name and some are beginning to write their name on their paintings. The majority of children are making good progress in talking and listening. A few are still learning how to take turns during discussions. Children enjoy looking at books and telling stories about what they have been doing in nursery and at home. Children have opportunities to explore number through meaningful play activities. In the nursery garden and in the

school gymnasium, children enjoy daily energetic play. They can talk about foods that help keep them healthy and each day they brush their teeth after snack. Almost all are able to choose activities. Staff are very good at using questions to get children to think about what they are doing and how they might get better.

At the primary stages, children are making satisfactory progress in reading, writing, listening and talking. They answer well in class and can discuss aspects of their learning confidently. At the early stages, children develop their talking skills through play. Staff support children with English as an additional language through discussion. Children in the upper stages can talk about the books they have read. Across primary stages, they are less good at talking and listening in small groups. At all stages, children write for a range of purposes. They used their literacy skills well when organising the celebration of 100 years of the school. Staff are starting to provide more writing activities and feedback to ensure pupils know how to improve their work. Children across the stages are making good progress in mathematics. Those in the upper stages talk confidently about mathematics and understand the use of mathematical skills in every day life. Those who need help with their learning receive the right kind of support. A few children could attain more if they attended more regularly. Across the stages, children use problem solving skills well in mathematics lessons but are less skilled in applying these to other areas of the curriculum. The school is very effective in providing a wide range of opportunities for children to develop their confidence in sporting and cultural activities in the community. Children enjoy their successes in netball and film-making competitions.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

The curriculum in the nursery is good and improving. It provides children with many motivating experiences. There is scope to involve children more in number activities in other areas of the curriculum. At the primary stages, children have a broad and balanced curriculum. Visiting teachers, the active schools coordinator and other community support staff contribute effectively to widen children's experiences. All

children receive two hours of physical education per week. Teachers provide good opportunities for children to develop their skills in citizenship through enterprise activities. Children learn about racial tolerance through effective programmes of religious and moral education and personal and social development. Teachers are beginning to provide children with opportunities to exercise choice in topics. More opportunities to use information and communications technology would further enhance children's learning.

Staff meet children's learning needs well in the nursery class. They are good at knowing when children need extra help with their learning. They plan activities and provide equipment to help children learn new skills. Staff need to adapt resources and activities more fully to meet the needs of younger children attending in the afternoon. At the primary stages, staff identify learning needs well and set activities at appropriate levels to enable most learners to make progress. They now need to provide the pace, support and challenge to ensure that they consistently help all learners to make progress. Teachers give clear explanations and use questioning well to check children's understanding. Staff, including specialist staff and learning assistants, give valuable, effective support to children with additional support needs. Individualised educational programmes and coordinated support plans have appropriate targets for learners. Parents and their children are involved in the drawing up and reviewing of these plans. Teachers give regular homework activities related to classwork.

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

Staff in the nursery and primary classes work well with support services such as social work and community services to support children's learning. Children including those with additional support needs are well supported as they move from nursery into primary school and primary to secondary. Children settle very well in the nursery playroom. Commendably, nursery staff and teachers plan learning activities involving both nursery and P1 children. This helps

children become confident individuals. Parents regularly help with play activities in the playroom. An increasing number of parents benefit from the adult learning courses which the school helps to arrange. A crèche is available for younger children which allows parents to take part in training which can lead to a qualification. Staff make parents feel welcome and treat all children equally, fairly and with respect.

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

Across the primary stages, staff, parents and children are actively involved in improving their school community. Children contribute well to pupil council and road safety activities. The pupil council liaises with the parent council to organise events such as the summer fair. The principal teacher organises a successful annual health week. The school has gained an Eco-Schools Scotland award at silver level. Parents, staff and visitors organise popular after-school clubs such as netball, drama and healthy cooking. Pupils in P7 are growing in confidence as they fulfil their duties at lunch time and in the playground. Staff keep detailed records on children's progress which they share with parents at meetings and through an annual school report.

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

Children feel safe and happy at school. They are very good at looking after each other and their school. All staff promote the wellbeing and support of the children. In classes, they expect children to work hard and use praise well to encourage them do their best. All children are well behaved in class and at break times. The school has effective procedures for dealing with bullying and racism. All staff are knowledgeable about child protection procedures. Wall displays and weekly assemblies celebrate children's achievements and help them value learning.

The school makes determined efforts to involve children in many local sporting and cultural events to extend their experience and raise their expectations.

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

The headteacher has developed a clear and shared vision for the school and has effectively identified developments for improvement. She monitors class lessons and tracks children's progress rigorously. She provided constructive advice to staff which helps them contribute well to improvement. The principal teacher is experienced and supports staff well in improving children's learning. Together, staff are working to extend approaches to evaluating teaching and learning within the school. The headteacher needs to ensure that processes for self-evaluation lead consistently to sharing of good practice and ongoing improvements.

## **9. What happens next?**

As a result of the good quality of education provided by the school, 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.

- Use self-evaluation to ensure consistent good practice in learning and teaching across the school.
- Continue to improve children's writing skills.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class, there were four requirements and three recommendations. All had been met.

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 Balhousie Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

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

**Managing Inspector:** Pat May  
16 December 2008

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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