



**Blair Atholl Primary School  
and Nursery Class  
Perth and Kinross Council  
7 June 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, children and the local community know whether their school<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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.

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

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The school**

Blair Atholl Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Blair Atholl and the surrounding area. The roll was 33, including eight in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in March 2011. Children's attendance was below the national average in 2009/2010. The headteacher also has management responsibility for Logierait Primary School. As a result, there are themes within the report which are similar to some raised in the inspection report for Logierait Primary School.

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

- Children's learning and outdoor experiences in the nursery.
- Increasing opportunities for children to collaborate with each other to complete tasks.
- Steps taken by the headteacher and staff to improve the work of the school.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

In the nursery, children are developing their confidence very well. They are kind and considerate towards each other when taking part in play activities. Staff talk to children regularly about their interests and views. This is helping children make choices about what they want to learn. Across the primary stages, most children enjoy learning and feel school is helping them become more confident. Increasingly, children benefit from activities which encourage them to work together in small groups and pairs. Children do not yet have enough responsibility for taking forward their own learning. They are not yet clear about what they are good at as learners or what they need to do to improve their learning.

The school is improving ways for children to achieve success in a range of activities. In the nursery, children learn to care for the environment through recycling and reusing materials. They find out about the properties of different materials by carrying out science investigations. Across the primary stages, children are developing their understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Those who attend the astronomy club are developing their scientific skills and an interest in the planets and solar system. Children are developing their

confidence and awareness of audience well through, for example, performing as part of a choir and taking part in school shows. Through taking part in school committees and groups, children are beginning to recognise the importance of working as part of a team. They achieve success in a variety of sporting events such as netball, curling and quidditch.

In the nursery, children are making good progress in their learning. In early language, most children listen well to stories and answer questions about what they have heard. They can recognise their own name in print. Children are beginning to explore early writing during some play activities. Most are developing their skills in measuring well, for example, when weighing ingredients for baking. They use mathematical language appropriately to compare models they have built. Across the primary stages, children are making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. Most children achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. When talking, children express their views and opinions confidently. During discussions there are occasions when children interrupt each other and do not always show they value what others have to say. Children enjoy reading. They find and select appropriate information from texts. Children's skills in analysing and investigating ideas in texts are not yet developed sufficiently well. Overall, children's skills in writing are not well enough developed. In mathematics, most children are accurate when completing written calculations involving number and money. Children do not always apply their skills in mental calculation quickly enough. They are confident in interpreting information from a variety of graphs and charts.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

Staff have started using the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence when planning children's learning. They enhance children's learning through the use of visitors to the school and visits to the surrounding area. In the nursery, staff use the outdoor environment effectively to provide children with a wide range of

learning opportunities to develop their skills in investigation and problem solving. Across the primary stages, staff are beginning to plan ways for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across learning. They now need to develop the curriculum further to ensure effective learning using the experiences and outcomes for health and wellbeing and technologies. Staff in the nursery and P1-3 have started to work together more to help build on children's learning from nursery to P1. Children receive two hours of good-quality physical education each week.

Staff know children very well and are sensitive to their individual needs. In the nursery, staff identify children's next steps in learning. They provide a range of activities which are mostly at the right level of difficulty. Staff use questioning skilfully to help support children's learning. Across the primary stages, staff share the purposes of lessons with children. They give clear explanations and instructions. Working with the education authority, the school has been improving arrangements for meeting children's learning needs. Whilst these arrangements have now reached a satisfactory standard, much more needs to be done to ensure staff give all children tasks which are pitched consistently at the right level of difficulty. Staff identify children requiring additional support with their learning. Support for learning assistants give valuable support to groups and individual children. The visiting support for learning teacher provides staff with helpful advice in approaches to supporting children who require additional help with their learning.

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

The school has productive links with the Active Schools coordinator to enrich children's learning through, for example, organising school walks, orienteering, cycling workshops and sports festivals. Staff encourage parents to become involved in supporting their child's learning through assisting with after-school activities and contributing to school committees as part of E-zone. The school informs parents

about its work through helpful newsletters and information evenings including, for example, a workshop about Curriculum for Excellence. Around half of the parents are happy with the work of the school although some have concerns about its arrangements for shared school leadership. Working together, staff, the Parent Council and the Education Authority now need to involve all parents fully in improving the school, building on the improvements that are now taking place. The school should improve arrangements for recording how it responds to any concerns or complaints from parents or the community. Staff are beginning to work with Logierait Primary School to plan joint learning activities for children. Arrangements to help children move from P7 to Pitlochry High School are appropriate.

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

The headteacher and staff are committed to improving the work of the school. Together they have responded well to addressing areas for improvement identified as part of the education authority's learning and achievement visits, including how children's learning needs are met. Staff work very well as a team. The headteacher has improved approaches towards self-evaluation and, in doing so, increased staff awareness of what the school is doing well and what it needs to do to improve. Staff recognise the importance of checking new approaches to learning and teaching are making a difference to children's learning. They work well with staff from Logierait Primary School to discuss how to improve aspects of learning and teaching. Together, they take forward similar priorities in the school improvement plan. This is helping staff improve children's learning. The school is increasing ways for children to be involved actively in improving their school community. Staff encourage children to take on leadership roles through acting as junior road safety officers and taking part in the eco and health committees. As a result, children are beginning to develop a sense of responsibility and citizenship. Approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not yet sufficiently thorough. The headteacher should make sure approaches to self-evaluation lead

to continued improvements. Children and parents now need to be more involved in evaluating the school's work and influencing areas for improvement.

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

Almost all children behave well in class and around the school. Staff place an importance on recognising and celebrating children's achievements on wall displays and during assemblies when children receive awards and certificates. Staff should have higher expectations of the rate of children's progress in their learning. Most children feel they are treated fairly and with respect. Children in the nursery learn about a range of cultures through celebrating festivals. Those in the primary classes learn about different faiths through the programme for religious and moral education. There are regular opportunities for religious observance. Most children feel safe and well cared for. Staff are aware of the school's policy and procedures for child protection.

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

Working closely with the education authority, the school has the capacity to improve. The headteacher is very committed to the school and its community. Since taking up post she has identified areas for developing the work of the school with a clear focus on improving children's learning. The headteacher and principal teacher have implemented important developments, including improving ways for the nursery to be involved in whole-school events. Staff and children increasingly take on leadership roles. The headteacher should ensure the remit for the principal teacher has an appropriate focus on leading and evaluating school improvement. She should implement plans to work with parents, children and staff to review the school's vision, values and aims. In doing so, the school, education authority and parents should work together to develop a shared understanding of how the school is improving with a view to ensuring further improvements in learning experiences for all children.



## 8. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, 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 in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in the way the school meets children's learning needs.

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

- Develop roles and partnerships with parents, children and staff to ensure continuous improvement in the work of the school.
- Continue to develop the curriculum taking account of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Further improve approaches to meeting children's learning needs.
- Build on arrangements for self-evaluation to ensure high-quality learning experiences for children.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement which has 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 Blair Atholl Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

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

**HM Inspector:** Janie McManus  
7 June 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](http://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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