



**Crieff Primary School and
Nursery Class
Perth and Kinross Council
5 May 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

Crieff Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the town of Crieff. The roll was 426, including 63 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in March 2009. The school has a specialist provision which caters for a small number of children who have complex learning difficulties. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. There have been a high number of staff absences over the past few years. The new headteacher was appointed to the school in August 2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite and well behaved children.
- Children's increasing confidence in their use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support their learning.
- Children's experiences in the expressive arts.
- Staff's positive attitude to school improvement and support for the new headteacher.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, children are making good progress in all aspects of their learning. They are happy, settled and confident. Children recognise their name in print. Most talk confidently to adults and share ideas with others. During play, they count, sort, match and recognise simple shapes. Children use their bodies well during movement activities. At the primary stages, some of the children's experiences in P1 and P2 build on their work in the nursery class. These include examples where children are actively involved in learning through high quality play experiences. At the upper stages, children who attend activities and clubs are developing confidence through their participation. From P5 to P7, a significant number achieve success through playing string and brass instruments. Those who take part in competitions and sporting events enjoy their experiences. Children learn well in drama, art and physical education and are making good progress. They are becoming increasingly confident in using ICT to support their learning, for example to carry out research and to include reports in their homework learning logs. Children are learning about the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. In

recent years, children's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has declined, particularly in writing. Throughout the school, many are capable of achieving higher standards. A few children, particularly at the early stages achieve national levels of attainment earlier than might normally be expected. The school has begun to build on this good start. Since August 2008, children's attainment from P3 to P7 is beginning to show some signs of improvement. Overall, however, children's progress in English language has some important weaknesses. Most children share their views confidently although a few do not listen well. Children make good progress in reading. The school's focus on writing is showing early signs of improvement, particularly at P1 and P2. Across the school, children are not making sufficient progress in mathematics. Too few children are confident when working with fractions and percentages. Children are not secure in their knowledge of number, money and measurement. They show a good understanding of time, shape, angles and information handling. They have difficulty in using problem solving and mental strategies. Throughout the school, children are not always aware of their learning. They need to develop more of an understanding of their strengths and what they need to improve. Children in the specialist provision enjoy taking part in physical education activities. However, overall, their learning experiences are not satisfactory.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery, staff plan a range of play activities which help children develop appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. They use outdoor areas and the gym well to enhance children's learning and to develop their skills. Staff now need to take more account of children's views when planning learning. At the primary stages, and in the specialist provision, the curriculum does not provide sufficient progression, depth or challenge. The headteacher, along with staff, has correctly identified the need to review and improve programmes and activities to ensure children make appropriate progress. Staff are beginning to develop the curriculum in line with the national initiative *Curriculum for Excellence*. The school's revised approach to writing is already having a positive impact on children's performance. Similar changes need to

be made to the teaching of mathematics. For example, staff should provide children with more regular and consistent practice in mental mathematics work and problem solving strategies. They should provide children with more opportunities to use their numeracy skills across different curricular areas. The school's arrangements for promoting healthy lifestyles are improving. Visitors and visiting specialists make learning meaningful and interesting for children. They help develop children's skills in art, drama and physical education. The school's approaches to supporting children's personal and social development are becoming more consistent. In the specialist provision, a number of children who display challenging behaviour are being helped to develop a responsible approach to caring for others and their environment.

In the nursery, staff know children well. Staff meet the needs of those children in the nursery who have additional support needs. They do not yet have a system to record their observations of children's learning to ensure they make appropriate progress. They need to do more to challenge higher achieving children. At the primary stages, and in the specialist provision, children's learning needs are not well enough met. Where practice is most effective, staff ensure that tasks and activities are well paced, challenging and stimulating. In a number of lessons, staff do not challenge children sufficiently and the pace of learning is too slow. At P3 to P7, a majority of children could learn at a faster pace. Some teachers have appropriate assessments systems and children's progress is being effectively tracked. However, the school does not yet have consistent arrangements for tracking children's progress. Support staff, including visiting specialists provide good assistance to children experiencing difficulties with their learning. Children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are well supported and included. The school's arrangements to monitor the progress of vulnerable groups need to continue to be further developed. Occasionally in classes, the behaviour of a few children interrupts the flow of learning. Since the arrival of the new headteacher, a range of appropriate strategies and support for children with behavioural difficulties had been implemented. The school now needs to continue to build on this good work which is having a positive

impact on children's experiences. Teachers provide clear instructions, share learning intentions with children and use questions well to further their learning. They are beginning to involve children more in discussions about learning.

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

The school has supportive links with psychological services, therapists, social workers and a few local businesses. The hearing impaired teacher, community link worker (EAL) and others help school staff support children's learning. The Parent Council is beginning to offer support to the school and is now ready to take on a wider range of responsibilities. The school keeps parents informed about its work through parent-staff meetings, newsletters, information events and the school website. A number of parents want better communication and more information on their children's progress and the work of the school. Parents and children would like a broader range of school activities and clubs. The school has an appropriate system for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents, children and other members of the community. A few parents felt that responses to their concerns could be dealt with more quickly. Children from the nursery class are supported through visits to help them move confidently into P1. Staff could enhance children's experiences further through improving the quality of information on children and sharing practical resources to support active play at P1. The school has appropriate transition arrangements for children moving from P7 to Crieff High School.

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

Most staff are enthusiastic. They are looking forward to supporting the headteacher and introducing new ideas and approaches. They are keen to learn more about the national *Curriculum for Excellence* and

engage in professional development individually and as a staff team. A few staff run events and clubs such as the 'Web Club' to improve children's experiences. Staff and children have worked together creatively to raise funds for local and national charities. A small number of children benefit from their involvement in school committees. Others need to have similar opportunities and learn about the activities of both the pupil council and eco committee. Throughout the school, children are beginning to benefit from increased opportunities to exercise responsibility, both in their learning and more widely across the school. Some staff evaluate their classroom practice but this is not consistent across the school. The new headteacher, along with her depute headteachers needs to develop the skills of staff through sharing classroom practice.

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

Across the school, most children are well behaved. They are friendly and polite to visitors, staff and each other. School staff are committed to children's care and wellbeing. They know about the school's arrangements for keeping children safe and work hard in carrying out their responsibilities for child protection. Nursery staff make effective use of the attractive accommodation and facilities to support children's learning. Teachers work hard to support those children whose attendance is not high enough. Despite the strong efforts of a number of individual teachers and support staff, children's overall attainment is too low. Children's achievements, including those outwith school, are celebrated at assemblies and in displays. Local ministers contribute to assemblies and support the school's religious observance. Staff are reviewing their courses to help children learn about other faiths.

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

Since her appointment, the headteacher has skilfully supported staff and improved staff morale. She has quickly established positive relationships within the school and improved aspects of

teamwork. She has involved staff in school improvement planning which has helped to improve the quality of children's learning. The depute headteachers have responsibility for aspects of the work of the school. Their effectiveness has been affected by staffing changes, long term absences and insufficient review of their impact. The headteacher, along with her depute headteachers, needs to review the remits of senior staff in order to clarify areas of responsibility and make necessary improvements. She should continue to engage with the local education authority to improve the work of the specialist provision. Staff are enthusiastic and a few are beginning to take on leadership roles. They are committed to the school but have not yet ensured sufficient improvements in children's learning and attainment. They now need to build on their recent good work and together, evaluate and improve the work of the school.

8. What happens next?

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the school has made.

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

- Continue to involve children actively in their learning.
- Improve children's performance in English language and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of children's experiences in the specialist provision.
- Build on the skills of staff to reflect upon and share effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Further review the remits of the depute headteachers to provide better leadership for learning and ensure that children's needs are being met.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were 3 requirements which had been addressed. In addition, 6 recommendations were made, 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 Crieff Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	weak
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	weak

Nursery class

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

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

The curriculum	weak
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Moira Cummings
5 May 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