



**Kirkmichael Primary  
School and Nursery Class  
by Blairgowrie  
Perth and Kinross Council  
24 August 2010**

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**

Kirkmichael Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Kirkmichael and surrounding rural area. The roll was 54, including 14 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in June 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

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

- Children's confident and positive attitude towards learning.
- The high level of responsibility shown by children within the school's citizenship programme.
- The use of the local environment as a context for learning.
- The contribution of staff to the headteacher's approach to school improvement.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

In the nursery class, children are happy and well behaved. They engage well in a range of experiences, playing together, taking turns and sharing toys. Most are able to concentrate well during whole-group activities. At the primary stages, children enjoy working purposefully together in groups on shared tasks and are motivated by activities which engage them actively in their learning. They frequently make effective use of computers and other information and communications technology in their learning. Children take responsibility for their learning through evaluating their own and others' performance. At times, more challenging and specific targets for personal and group performance would help raise achievement still further.

The school ethos encourages and celebrates wider achievement. Nursery children achieve well through play and in art and craft activities. They respond enthusiastically to songs and music and are developing their understanding of the natural world through a range of outdoor activities. At the primary stages, all children participate in

activities within the school's citizenship programme which help develop their personal and social skills and enable them to take forward their own ideas. All children helped create and develop the school garden. The eco committee has led work to achieve an Eco-Schools Scotland green flag award. The health committee has taken a lead in a range of initiatives including promoting healthy eating. Children also contribute to school improvement through participating in the pupil council, health and enterprise groups or by acting as junior road safety officers. Children develop confidence and skills for life through a wide range of class educational visits, residential experiences for children at P6 and P7 and by taking part in a range of sports clubs including football and netball. Children show confidence in presenting and performing at school assemblies. All have performed Scottish poetry and many have demonstrated Scottish country dancing to parents and members of the community.

Children in the nursery class are beginning to progress well in their learning. Most are developing their skills in talking and listening well. Children are beginning to explore early writing through play and are developing an awareness of letter sounds. However, children's skills in early reading and writing require further development. Most children identify and use some numbers, shapes and colours during play. In the primary classes, high standards in English language and mathematics have been maintained over the last three years. Most children achieve appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics with the majority achieving these earlier than might be expected. Those who require additional support are making good progress towards appropriate targets. Most children's skills in listening and talking are developing well. They read with fluency and expression and have a good understanding of the use of language in writing prose and poetry. Some children need to be encouraged to write at greater length. In mathematics, children show confidence and skill in written and mental calculation. At P6 and P7, children need to improve their understanding of the relation between decimals, percentages and fractions. Children are able to describe the strategies they used to solve a range of problems.

## Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff are making a good start in developing the curriculum to take account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are beginning to make effective use of the experiences and outcomes to plan children's learning. In the nursery class, children learn through a wide range of play activities which help develop their knowledge and understanding of early literacy and numeracy. They benefit from frequent outdoor educational experiences and respond well when given the opportunity to investigate and solve problems. In the primary classes, class topics, such as that on natural disasters at P4 to P7, take good account of children's interests. These topics are also used well to provide a context for learning numeracy and literacy skills. Increasingly, teachers are making very effective use of the school grounds and local area for outdoor learning in curriculum areas such as science, mathematics and art. All children benefit from two hours of good-quality physical education each week. The curriculum is enriched by the contributions of visiting teachers of physical education, art and design, drama and music.

Teachers are good at meeting children's learning needs. In the nursery class, staff take good account of children's individual circumstances and needs. They interact with children well and give them positive support. Staff record observations of children's learning and now need to use this information more fully to identify what individual children will learn next. In the primary classes, teachers take good account of children's interests and prior learning in selecting learning activities. Tasks have a clear purpose and often encourage children to be active in their learning and think things out for themselves or with others. Teachers should now review the balance between individual and group learning to maximise the pace of work and the level of children's involvement. Staff are very good at identifying children in need of additional support and they work well with the visiting teacher of learning support. Teachers evaluate children's specific learning needs accurately and agree very clear short-term targets for their learning. Well-planned individual

programmes help children to recover any ground they may have lost, or address gaps in their learning.

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

Staff communicate effectively with parents through regular newsletters and informative written reports on children's progress. Well-attended parents' evenings also enable staff and parents to share views on children's progress. Staff follow appropriate procedures to respond to any concerns or complaints. They consult parents appropriately about health education. The Parent Council is kept well informed about the school's work and is consulted appropriately. It has taken the initiative in organising financial support from parents to improve school resources. A small number of parents provide valuable direct support to important school initiatives such as the garden club. Parents and members of the community work well together with the school to support children's enterprise work in the local shop. The village session house, an outreach facility of Perth College, has been very supportive in helping to organise and host arts related workshops for children. A range of council services, including educational psychology and speech therapy, gives regular advice and support to the school. Children moving from the nursery class to P1 are very well supported. An imaginative *Metamorphosis* project with a drama focus is helping P7 children feel confident about their forthcoming transfer to Blairgowrie High School.

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

Staff and children are cooperating very well to improve the school community. All teachers and a classroom assistant have a leadership role within the citizenship programme which involves all children in actively contributing to school improvement. Staff also contribute well in taking forward priorities in the school improvement plan and

evaluating their success. The school now needs to extend these approaches by seeking children's and parents' views on learning and teaching. The pupil council has the potential to play a leading role in such an initiative. The headteacher monitors and evaluates effectively the work of the primary and nursery class. This enables her to give staff helpful advice which has been important in ensuring consistency in implementing *Curriculum for Excellence* developments.

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

The school has a welcoming and happy atmosphere. Children are confident and well behaved. They respond well to the staff's high expectations and have a positive attitude towards learning. Relationships between staff and children are very supportive and children are very good at helping each other. Staff are sensitive to the needs of the children and give a high priority to their care and welfare. The school has suitable procedures in place for child protection, dealing with bullying should this be necessary and contacting parents promptly in relation to unexplained absences. Staff place high priority on promoting children's health and wellbeing. They ensure children have a good understanding of the health benefits of exercise and fitness. They use *Bounce Back* lessons well to develop children's mental resilience and self confidence. Staff treat children fairly and use class topics well to develop their understanding of diversity issues such as race equality. They recognise children's achievements and successes regularly and celebrate these at an end of session ceremony and at weekly school assemblies. These assemblies also provide suitable opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher has given a clear lead in taking forward her firm vision for improving the school. With strong staff support, she has taken forward a range of well-judged initiatives which take account of *Curriculum for Excellence* and are significantly improving children's

educational experience. She is involving staff and children successfully in taking forward priorities in the school improvement plan. She works effectively with the Parent Council and is actively trying to involve more parents to contribute to the life of the school. Having established a clear momentum for improvement, the need now is to review priorities to continue to build on the most successful initiatives. With continued teamwork across the school community, the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

## **8. What happens next?**

As a result of the 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.

- Continue to raise levels of children's achievement by agreeing with them suitably challenging targets for personal and group performance.
- Review progress with current priorities to build on the most successful initiatives and identify areas for further improvement.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements. Three recommendations were made and these 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 Kirkmichael Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Children's experiences</b>	<b>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>good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Grant Mathison  
24 August 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](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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