



**Pitcairn Primary School
Perth
Perth and Kinross Council
14 December 2010**

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

Pitcairn Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the villages of Almondbank, Pitcairngreen and the surrounding areas of Perth. The roll was 91 when the inspection was carried out in October 2010. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2008/2009. A new headteacher had been in post for seven weeks at the time of the inspection.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Happy, confident children who are motivated to learn and enthusiastic about sharing their skills and knowledge.
- Staff's and children's approaches to including children with additional support needs fully in the life of the school.
- Staff teamwork and commitment to improving the school's work.
- The leadership of the new headteacher.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most children are motivated and enthusiastic learners. They work well with staff and each other to develop their skills and understanding. Increasingly, they are making decisions about their learning. Children in the early years need more varied opportunities to learn through play. Children, particularly in the upper stages, are becoming more skilled in peer and self-assessment. Children are being encouraged successfully to share their thinking but need to be given more responsibility for their learning. In most classes, children are given useful feedback about their progress but this needs to be more consistent. Staff need to ensure that all children are clear about their strengths and development needs and about how to improve.

Children are making good progress in their personal and social development. They are enhancing their citizenship and leadership skills through the school's extended committee structure. The majority of children have enjoyed success at local competitions in tennis, rugby, football and chess. They are developing their understanding of how to look after the environment through the Eco-Schools Scotland programme. Groups of children are becoming more physically active

through participating in swimming and curling classes. The school has firm plans to widen choice by offering cheerleading, football, a residential stay and an outdoor classroom.

Overall, children are making good progress in mathematics and satisfactory progress in English language. Almost all children listen attentively to instructions and explanations. Almost all respond well to questions and can talk at length about their work. Children need more opportunities to read with and to others. Across all stages, the standard of spelling is poor and in grammar, handwriting and presentation standards vary too widely. Children at P4 to P7 need to write at greater length. Children are not yet making sufficient progress in their skills in English language as they progress through the school. A few children are capable of achieving better and need a greater level of difficulty in their tasks and activities. In mathematics, children complete oral and written calculations correctly. Almost all children are developing their use of mathematical language well. They have a good understanding from an early age of the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. They know how to handle and interpret information from graphs and charts accurately, appropriate to their stage. Across the school, children have well developed skills in problem solving and can apply these in practical situations. Children are less secure in their understanding of calculations involving measurement and time. They need more work in consolidating their learning in decimals and fractions. Overall, children have a sound understanding of numerical processes relevant to their stage. Information and communications technology needs to be used more effectively in supporting their learning across the curriculum. Children with additional support needs are making good progress in their learning.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff provide a broad range of learning experiences for children. They have reviewed the curriculum to take account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are developing successfully relevant, motivating and interesting contexts for children's learning, enabling children to apply

their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning are developing well. Whole school enterprise activities and health events give children important skills for life and work. Programmes in several subject areas do not yet ensure sufficient progression in children's skills, particularly in literacy. Visiting specialists in art and design, music, physical education and drama enhance the quality of children's learning. All children benefit from two hours of good-quality physical education each week. Staff are increasing children's awareness of cultural diversity, equality and fairness. Curricular transitions from P7 to S1 need strengthening.

Staff respond sensitively to children and help them when they need encouragement and support. Tasks, activities and resources are appropriate to meet the learning needs of most children. Teachers work well with support staff and provide helpful feedback to children. In most classes, homework is regular and varied and helps children to reinforce their learning. Staff have improved the arrangements for identifying children's needs. Children requiring additional support have appropriate learning plans. These need to be shared with visiting specialists and long-term learning targets need to be clarified to guide planning.

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

Staff have improved the way they work with wider support agencies. They have been learning, through good cluster arrangements, from other schools about how to support children more effectively. Positive links with Perth Grammar School ensure a smooth transition for children leaving P7. Plans are in place to involve parents more in their child's learning. The Parent Council is supportive. The school communicates effectively with parents through newsletters and reports, and ensures they are informed about sensitive health issues. Links to community clubs are improving through the work of the active schools coordinator.

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

All children are now more involved in contributing to school improvement through a variety of approaches. They are involved in evaluating their own and others' progress in class. They need now to be more involved in discussions about how to improve their learning. Along with the principal teacher, the headteacher has introduced a more focused approach to evaluating the work of the school which involves all staff. This includes sharing and discussing good practice and classroom observations, with a focus on learning and teaching. Teachers have yet to involve parents in this process or to track children's progress consistently across all stages. Staff need to build on these processes to increase their positive impact on children's learning.

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

Relationships between staff and children are very positive and based on mutual respect. Children are proud of their school and feel safe and secure. All staff are aware of child protection procedures for keeping children safe. The school is developing its approach to religious observance with the local chaplain. Fundraising activities help children to think more about those who live with poverty and disability. Children are familiar with equality issues and are learning about diversity. Children are polite, interested and welcoming to visitors. They are keen to talk about their achievements and celebrate these through whole school get togethers. Staff use praise well to encourage children. They have high expectations of behaviour but need to increase expectations of what children can achieve.

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

The headteacher provides strong leadership and has taken steps to improving the learning environment, the curriculum and children's learning experiences. Staff are responding well to the new vision and leadership style and changes have been well received. A new clarity

in the school's focus has accelerated the progress of implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Increasingly, staff are working more effectively together to bring about improvements for children. The principal teacher provides very effective support to the headteacher and staff and has encouraged greater teamworking amongst staff. She has introduced a more effective approach to identifying and supporting children who need additional support. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

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 learners' achievement.

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

- Build on the positive steps taken to develop further both *Curriculum for Excellence* and learning through play in the early years.
- Improve tracking and monitoring of children's progress and involve staff and parents more in evaluating the work of the school.
- Improve attainment in literacy and English through increased consistency in learning and teaching approaches.
- Increase the consistency of challenge across the school to meet the needs of all children more effectively.

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 Pitcairn Primary School.

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

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Donald Macleod
14 December 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 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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