

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 29 JULY 2009

REPORT ON: HMIE INSPECTION OF CLAYPOTTS CASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 379-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the findings of the HMIE Inspection of Claypotts Castle Primary School and Nursery Class.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Director of Education to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement contained in the report

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Claypotts Castle Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in March 2009. The school includes a hearing impaired unit (HIU) for a small number of deaf children. They published a report on their findings on 2nd June 2009. At the time of the inspection the roll was 453, including 80 in the nursery.

4.2 HMIE identified the following key strengths of the school:

- children who are well behaved and keen to learn
- the care provided by all staff and their success in including children with a wide range of support needs
- staff commitment to providing opportunities for children to achieve through out-of-school sporting and arts activities
- the promotion of reading for enjoyment through the children's involvement with the school library.

4.3 The following areas for improvement were agreed with the school and education authority:

- continue to raise attainment in English language and mathematics
- provide more opportunity for parents to be involved in the life of the school and their children's learning

- develop more effective self-evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement in children's learning
- review the roles and remits of senior staff to focus on leadership of the curriculum and learning.

4..0 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 HMIE reports use a six-point scale for reporting performance:

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

4.4.2 The following quality indicators from "How Good Is Our School 3" (HGIOS 3) were evaluated:

Quality Indicator	Nursery	Primary
Improvements in performance	Satisfactory	Good
Learners' experiences	Good	Good
Meeting learning needs	Good	Good
The curriculum	Good	Good
Improvement through self-evaluation	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

4.5 The School Improvement Plan (2009-2012) includes a focus on these areas for improvement. These will be regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated in line with both the school and authority quality improvement calendar.

4.6 HMIE have indicated that they are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a consequence, they will make no more visits to Claypotts Castle School following this inspection. The school and education authority will inform parents about the progress in improving the quality of education within 2 years of the publication of the report.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

5.2 There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 The following Background Papers were relied upon in preparation of this Report:

- HMIE Report: Claypotts Castle Primary School and Nursery Class, Dundee City Council, 2nd June 2009.

JIM COLLINS
Director of Education

14 July 2009

JC/LW

**Claypotts Castle Primary School and Nursery Class
Dundee City Council**

2 June 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.

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1. The school

Claypotts Castle Primary School is a new non-denominational school with a nursery class . The school includes a hearing impaired unit (HIU) for a small number of deaf children. The school opened in June 2008. It serves the Douglas area of Dundee City. The roll was 453, including 80 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in March 2009. Pupils' attendance was below the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children who are well behaved and keen to learn.
- The care provided by staff and their success in including children with a wide range of support needs.
- Staff commitment to providing opportunities for children to achieve through out-of-school sporting and arts activities.
- The promotion of reading for enjoyment through children's involvement with the school library.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery class are happy in their learning environment. Almost all are developing friendships and learning how to cooperate with other children. They are developing confidence and independence. Almost all are making steady progress in many aspects of their learning. Children listen well to stories and are keen to talk about books. With good support from staff, they are learning new skills in number and enjoy counting during play activities. They respond well to opportunities to play outdoors on a daily basis, although the outdoor play area is not yet developed fully. Children are making some use of computers in their learning. They are involved in planning what they want to learn though this can be developed further.

In the primary classes, almost all children are motivated and keen to learn. They cooperate well with each other during activities. Children with additional support needs are actively involved in class lessons, volunteering to contribute and being included in discussions by the class teacher. Children respond very well to the wide range of opportunities to extend their achievements. In the upper stages, children are very proud of their role as guides at nearby Claypotts Castle for Historic Scotland. At P6, children play a leading role in organising and improving the very well used school library. In addition to raising awareness on aspects of recycling, the eco group has created an interest in gardening by involving many classes in growing potatoes. The group now plans to develop a herb garden in the school grounds. Many children gain a strong sense of personal success through their involvement in school choirs, instrumental groups and the very wide range of arts and sporting activities organised by staff during lunch breaks and after school. Children's levels of attainment show signs of improvement in the current session. Most children achieve expected national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Children listen closely to instructions and explanations. Group discussion is lively with children readily sharing their views. At the early stages, children are making steady progress in learning to read and are able to share straightforward pieces of information. By the upper stages, most tackle unprepared text well. By P3, most children produce short pieces of writing with appropriate use of punctuation. In the middle and upper stages, children enjoy the challenge of written tasks. At P6 and P7, a visit by a local writer inspired children to begin writing their own imaginative novels. In mathematics, most children work well with numbers, both orally and in their written work. They have very good knowledge of shapes and angles. Across the school they can accurately use information from a range of graphs and charts. Their ability to identify and use problem solving strategies is less well developed.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children in the nursery class benefit from a good range of activities and experiences. They know and enjoy the established nursery routines. Children's activities have a strong emphasis on learning through play. The activities planned by staff are helping most children to progress in their learning. However, some children would benefit from more challenging activities. In the primary classes, children experience a broad curriculum which includes good use of the local environment to enhance their learning. Teachers are at the early stages of developing aspects of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. This work is beginning to improve children's experiences in some classes. For example, at P5, a fair trade project has enthused children and provided very good opportunities to work with a local business and one in India. Children undertook independent research and used information and communications technology (ICT) and literacy and numeracy skills in order to produce environmentally friendly jute bags. School managers need to ensure that changes to the curriculum are well thought through and implemented consistently from nursery to P7. Across the school, children make good use of the computer suite. All teachers do not integrate ICT as part of their on-going work in class. The school has yet to provide two hours of quality physical education each week. Children experience high quality provision in music. Their personal and social skills, and awareness of health issues are very well developed. Staff are increasing children's understanding of the similarities and differences among people and the need for respect.

Staff in the nursery and primary classes provide children with good support. Relationships between staff and children are positive. Almost all children indicate they get help when they need it. Class teachers ensure that work is set at an appropriate level in reading and mathematics. They provide children with helpful advice on how to improve writing. Teachers now need to discuss with children how to improve in other areas of their learning. The development of closer curricular links between nursery and P1 would increase the rate of progress at the early stages. Support for learning, English as an additional language and HIU staff provide skilled support for children within classes and in small groups. A small number of children have individualised educational plans. These are suitably detailed and contain clear targets and practical strategies to help children achieve their targets. Staff in the HIU provide valuable support for communication by signing in class and a tutor offers signing classes for children, parents and staff. Hearing impaired children and those for whom English is an additional language are making good and sometimes very good progress.

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

Nursery staff have developed positive relationships with parents. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were very positive about their children's experiences. The Parent Council plays an important role in fund raising. It has supported improvements in the school library and extending the availability of interactive technology. The Parent Council is beginning to become involved in wider issues impacting on children's learning. For example, they are about to find out what parents think about homework. The school should do more to seek the views of parents and involve them in their children's learning. Staff actively seek involvement from local community groups and businesses to broaden children's experience. They work closely with staff from local schools to share practice. The school has well-developed links with a number of partner agencies. These include health professionals, social work services, the police and the local church. This contact provides valuable support for a number of children. Children are well supported as they move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school. The school deals promptly with any complaints.

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

Children in the nursery class are learning how to make decisions that affect their nursery experiences. In the primary classes, children have influenced key decisions about their new school. They have chosen the name of their school and designed the badge and uniform.

Children contribute to improving their school by taking part in the pupil council, the eco group and running the school library. They now need more opportunities to say how their learning might be improved. School staff work well as a team. They are keen to learn from others' practice. Action taken by staff has improved children's attainment in mathematics and generally made learning more interesting. Teachers organise as many as 17 additional clubs and activities which children enjoy and appreciate. Staff ensure that children with additional support needs are included in these activities. Teachers reflect on their work. Senior staff observe lessons and discuss teachers' plans. They study data on children's progress. Greater use should be made of the views of children, staff and parents to inform next steps for improvement. Overall, self-evaluation activities need to become more rigorous to ensure continuous improvement in the nursery and primary classes.

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

All children and staff are proud of their school. They enjoy working and learning in their new accommodation. Staff are committed to the wellbeing of children and have a good understanding of child protection procedures. All staff have high expectations of behaviour to which children respond well. Staff and children report that behaviour has improved since transferring to the new school. This session there has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions. Almost all children indicate that they feel safe and can talk to an adult if they have a concern. They are treated fairly and with respect. Their achievements are celebrated in school and in newsletters. Some children have experienced minor disruption to their learning due to changes in teaching staff.

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

The headteacher is very proud of the school and is well regarded by children, staff and parents. The headteacher and depute headteachers have ensured a smooth move to the new school. They now need to play a more direct role in leading curriculum development and ensuring that agreed improvement priorities are implemented fully to further improve children's learning. Early years practitioners work hard in the nursery to ensure that children have a positive nursery experience. They are well supported by a temporary teacher. Senior staff need to ensure that the nursery class has a stronger sense of direction in developing children's learning experiences. In the primary classes, teachers have been encouraged to try out new ways of working and this initiative has met with some success.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that 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 following this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

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

- Continue to raise attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Provide more opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school and their children's learning.
- Develop more effective self-evaluation to ensure on-going improvement in children's learning.
- Review the roles and remit of senior staff to focus on leadership of the curriculum

and learning.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class in June 2006 there was one requirement and two recommendations. The requirement and one recommendation had been addressed. In order to meet the second recommendation, the nursery should continue to develop energetic physical play.

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 Claypotts Castle Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Anne Park
2 June 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

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Footnotes

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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