

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -18 NOVEMBER 2009

REPORT ON: HMIE INSPECTION OF DOWNFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 534-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the findings of the HMIE Inspection of Downfield 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 Downfield Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in June 2009. They published a report on their findings in September 2009. At the time of the inspection the roll was 432, including 83 in the nursery.

4.2 HMIE identified the following strengths of the school:

- a high-quality environment for learning, both indoors and outdoors
- the wide range of out-of-class activities which enhance children's experiences
- the commitment and teamworking of all staff to change and improvement
- effective contributions made by hard working staff to the care and welfare of children
- the leadership of the head teacher in ensuring the successful move to the new school and the merger with Kirkton nursery.

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

- continue to work to ensure greater pace and challenge for all children
- continue to develop approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the nursery and primary classes to ensure consistently high quality learning and teaching
- further develop children's ownership of their learning and increase opportunities for children to apply learning in a range of contexts

4.4 On 29th July 2009, report number 377-2009 was presented to the Scrutiny Committee outlining the findings of the Care Commission Inspection of Downfield Early Years Centre. The HMIE report refers to the Care Commission report, concluding that the one requirement and three of the six recommendations in the Care Commission report had been addressed. The outstanding recommendations are contained within the inspection report of September 2009.

4.5 Quality Indicators

4.5.1 HMIE reports using 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

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

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

4.6 In addition, HMIE included 2 good practice boxes in the report namely "*Media Image Education*" and "*Out-of-school hours activities*". These are included when the practice is deemed to be exemplary and worthy of specific note.

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

4.8 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 further visits following this inspection. The school and education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education within 2 years.

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), Director of Finance.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- HMIE Report: Downfield Primary School and Nursery Class, Dundee City Council, September 2009.

JIM COLLINS
Director of Education

30 October 2009

JC/LW



**Downfield Primary School
and Nursery Class
Dundee City Council
1 September 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

Downfield Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves an area in the north east of Dundee. The roll was 432, including 83 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- A high-quality environment for learning, both indoors and outdoors.
 - The wide range of out-of-class activities which enhance children's experiences.
 - The commitment and teamworking of all staff to change and improvement.
 - Effective contributions made by hard working staff to the care and welfare of children.
 - The leadership of the headteacher in ensuring the successful move to the new school and the merger with Kirkton nursery.
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3. Examples of good practice

- Media Image Education
 - Out-of-school hours activities
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4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery class are motivated and keen to learn. They work very well on activities without close supervision from an adult. Children are becoming more independent and are developing good friendships that sustain and support them in their learning. In the

primary classes, teachers at the early stages build very effectively on how children learn in the nursery. At all stages children work well together in pairs and small groups and can talk about different learning styles. Children benefit from examples of very effective teaching, in which they are encouraged to be responsible, independent learners and to think for themselves. This practice is not yet consistent across the school. Activities outwith class lessons, such as visits to national and local places of interest, together with contributions from visitors to the school add to the quality of children's learning.

Children are developing an appropriate awareness of the need to care for the environment. As a result, the school has won an Eco-School Scotland silver award. Children could identify examples of health promoting activities throughout the school. These include tasting new foods, cooking with health assistants in P6/P7 and attending the breakfast club. The school has gained a silver award from the authority as a Health Promoting School and is working towards achieving the gold award. Children's skills in using information and communications technology (ICT) are developing well. Children at P6 are able to use their ICT skills well to plan and deliver presentations to parents of the incoming children at P1.

Children in the nursery class are making good progress in their development and learning. They listen well and talk confidently when communicating their ideas and opinions. Almost all children can recognise their own name and are developing an interest in letters and sounds. They should now have more opportunities to have fun play at 'writing' in imaginative play. Children count confidently and play with numbers in the playroom and outdoors. The school has maintained very good standards of attainment in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. Most children are attaining expected national levels. Those in the early stages are achieving earlier than might normally be expected. However, these early gains are not maintained as children progress throughout the school. In English language, most children listen attentively to teachers and each other and talk about issues confidently. At all stages children read well and can write for a range of purposes. However, some children,

particularly in the middle and upper stages lack appropriate skills in presentation, handwriting and spelling. In mathematics, almost all children are developing appropriate skills in written and mental calculation. Children at all stages are particularly confident in number work including multiplication tables and can display and interpret information well. Children are acquiring good investigative skills through their topic work in environmental studies. They have developed a range of skills in music and aspects of science.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff provide an enjoyable and appropriate curriculum. They discuss and review children's learning experiences and are continually striving to improve the range and quality of their programmes. Children enjoy energetic play in the attractive outdoor areas and are learning about caring for the environment. There is scope to develop this outdoor area further, and also to expand opportunities for literacy and numeracy through play. At the primary stages, teachers provide an appropriately well structured variety of learning experiences. Teachers have made a good start to implementing aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The school is making a very good start to the implementation of GLOW, the national ICT framework for schools, in a number of classes. Children use GLOW well for their homework, research and discussion. They take part in online meetings with a local author-in-residence to further explore stories and events. The school now recognise the need to review the writing programme to ensure that children's skills in handwriting and spelling are further developed and improved. The school should review its arrangements for children in P6 and P7 to learn French. The school is working towards providing two hours of good-quality physical education each week.

In the nursery class, staff are sensitive to children's family circumstances. They ensure that all children are fully included in the work of the nursery. Staff are aware of factors that might hinder learning and address them promptly through well-planned group activities. They now need to challenge higher achieving children and

ensure that their next steps in learning are clear. In the primary classes, teachers and support staff give children useful individual support which helps them in their learning. Most tasks and activities set by teachers are at the correct level of difficulty for children. Homework is varied and appropriately frequent. On occasion, the pace of learning in a few classes is too slow and activities lack challenge for some pupils. The quality of feedback varies too much throughout the school, with some pupils unsure of what they needed to do to improve. Staff work successfully with a range of agencies to give useful support to individual children. Children with additional support needs are making good progress towards appropriate targets set within individualised educational programmes (IEPs).

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

The school works closely with the Parent Council and the parent-teacher association. Parents are actively involved in raising funds to support developments within the school including the purchase of a new reading scheme. Teachers have formed productive partnerships with a range of wider agencies and individuals outside the school. Teachers produce helpful annual written reports to parents on children's progress. The headteacher deals sensitively with any concerns or complaints and ensures parents are appropriately consulted about sensitive health issues. There are effective procedures to support children entering P1 from the nursery class and children transferring from P7 to a range of local secondary schools.

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

Children willingly take on responsibilities and support each other well. Older children act as buddies to children in P1 and take part in paired reading initiatives with younger children. The headteacher recognises there is further scope to develop the leadership role of children in the

life of the school. The headteacher and the depute headteacher visit classes to observe the quality of learning and teaching and comment on teachers' written plans. They also track children's progress in reading, writing and mathematics and regularly monitor children's written work. The school now needs to build on these arrangements to ensure continuous improvement throughout all stages.

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

Almost all staff have very positive relationships with children. Teachers make effective use of praise and the school's system of rewards to celebrate children's achievements. They show care and concern for children's wellbeing. Staff deal very effectively with any incidents which require adult support. The school successfully encourages children to take part in a range of lunchtime and out-of-school hours clubs. Children are developing as responsible global citizens through participation in fundraising activities, such as the fashion show for *Clic Sargent* and raising money for Rwanda. Children are treated fairly and equally and most are caring and well behaved. Assemblies provide very good opportunities to celebrate children's achievement and for religious observance. All staff are knowledgeable about child protection procedures. Arrangements for monitoring children's attendance are effective and well managed.

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

The headteacher has a clear focus on improving learning and teaching. She managed the merger with Kirkton nursery skilfully and clearly knows the strengths and development needs of all her staff. She is not afraid to take difficult decisions in her drive to move the school forward. All staff are very committed to their school and its community. They are actively engaged in self-evaluation to improve planning, learning and teaching, and the quality of children's work. The headteacher and depute headteacher give regular feedback to teachers on children's learning experiences. Class teachers

successfully lead working groups, for example on curriculum planning and on learning, teaching and attainment. Almost all teachers are enthusiastic and want to further improve outcomes for children. The school is now in a strong position to continue its improvement.

9. 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 work to ensure greater pace and challenge for all children.
- Continue to develop approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the nursery and primary classes to ensure consistently high quality learning and teaching.
- Further develop children's ownership of their learning and increase opportunities for children to apply learning in a range of contexts.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the centre there was one requirement and six recommendations. Three recommendations and one requirement had been addressed. Staff had still to develop a written participation strategy which clarifies how parents and children can participate in assessing and improving the quality of the service offered by the nursery. The other recommendations are raised in the report.

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 Downfield Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	good
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	good

HM Inspector: David M Martin
1 September 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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