

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 DECEMBER 2015

REPORT ON: EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) INSPECTION OF ST MARY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 454-2015

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of Education Scotland (HMI) following an inspection at St Mary's RC Primary School.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Executive Director of Children and Families Service 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 St Mary's RC Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland (HMI) in September 2015. They published a report on their findings on 1 December 2015. At the time of the inspection 314 children were on the primary school roll.

4.2 The inspectors identified the following strengths of the school:

- Confident and well-behaved children who are motivated to learn.
- The caring staff team who provide high quality pastoral support and positive learning experiences for children.
- The dedicated headteacher held in high regard by staff, parents and wider community.
- The opportunities and value placed upon children having a say and bringing about positive change to their school.

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

- Improve the curriculum.
- Improve approaches to tracking and assessing children's progress to ensure attainment is raised.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school and nursery class.

4.4 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 Education Scotland (HMI) 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
adequate/satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

4.4.2 The following quality evaluations were given at this inspection:

Quality Indicator	Primary School	Nursery Class
Improvements in performance	Good	Good
Learners' experiences	Very Good	Good
Meeting learning needs	Very Good	Good
	For both the school (and nursery class)	
The curriculum	Satisfactory	
Improvement through self-evaluation	Satisfactory	

- 4.5 HMI indicated that they are satisfied with the overall quality of provision at St Mary's RC Primary and are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, they will make no further visits in connection with this inspection and the Area Lead Officer will work with Dundee City Council to build capacity for improvement. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Dundee City Council will inform parents about the school's progress.
- 4.6 Education Scotland has issued increased expectations every session since 2011 for Quality Indicators 5.1 The Curriculum and 5.9 Self Evaluation. The school reflected against the increased expectations effectively through their self evaluation and acknowledged the areas where they need to continue to develop.
- 4.7 In relation to The Curriculum, there is a greater focus on tracking progress across the Broad General Education and this is being supported by recent National developments such as the draft National Improvement Framework. There is also a strong emphasis on the early years and ensuring smooth transitions across all stages. The evaluations reflect the National context as well as the local context and the Local Authority is working with Education Scotland to support the school in its progress in this regard.
- 4.8 In relation to self evaluation, there is a greater focus on every member of staff taking responsibility for their own career long professional learning and engagement in Professional Update, which has just been implemented nationally in the last session. As such schools are shifting the culture and raising the profile of professional learning. There is also a greater focus on leadership at all levels. The Education Manager and the Education Officer will continue to monitor the progress and identify appropriate professional learning opportunities and support as required.

- 4.9 St Mary's RC Primary School's *School Improvement Plan (2015-2018)* already 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 local authority's quality improvement calendars. The attached appendix gives an analysis of the report and outlines improvements made to date.
- 4.10 The Children and Families Service regularly analyse the results of inspections and internal Quality Assurance procedures to identify areas for support and work closely with Education Scotland to deliver appropriate professional learning for staff at all levels to ensure continuous improvement.

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. There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

MICHAEL WOOD
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

December 2015

Dundee City Council
Education Department
Scrutiny Committee Report Summary Notes
Inspection and Reporting

Inspection Agency	HMI
Report Publication Date	1 December 2015

Name of Establishment	St Mary's RC Primary School
Sector	Primary
Name of Head Teacher	Mrs Liz Conroy
Roll	276

Inspection Outcomes

Quality Indicator	Primary	Nursery	Secondary
1.1 Improvements in Performance	Good	Good	
2.1 Learners' Experiences	Very Good	Good	
5.1 Meeting Learning Needs	Very Good	Good	
5.1 The Curriculum	Satisfactory		
5.9 Improvement Through Self-Evaluation	Satisfactory		

The report uses the following word scale:

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

Key Strengths

Confident and well-behaved children who are motivated to learn.
The caring staff team who provide high quality pastoral support and positive learning experiences for children.
The dedicated headteacher held in high regard by staff, parents and wider community.
The opportunities and value placed upon children having a say and bringing about positive change to their school.

Areas for Improvement and Action

Improve the curriculum.
Improve approaches to tracking and assessing children's progress to ensure attainment is raised.
Improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school and nursery class.

Analysis of Report

The School Improvement Plan 2015/16 reflects ongoing areas for improvement and action and provides a clear strategic focus for school improvement. The findings of the HMI Inspection will be taken into account in this first year of the new three year plan and will inform the new School Improvement Plan. The report reflects the evidence gathered to inform our priorities and our identified areas for improvement for the 2015 / 2018 plan.

It was recognised that at both the primary stages and in the nursery class, children have positive learning experiences and almost all children are eager to learn and are motivated by their interesting learning activities. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, most children, including those who have English as an additional language, are making good progress in literacy and English and children's writing is of a good standard. Our focus on raising attainment in literacy remains a priority for the school and staff are engaging in a range of professional learning opportunities to further enhance their skills in this area. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children are developing confidence in their mental agility and increasing accuracy when making mental calculations. Further improving attainment in numeracy and mathematics is a key priority for us.

Our approach to care and welfare ensures a supportive and nurturing environment is provided by staff which encourages children to value one another's achievements and ensures a positive climate for children to learn. It is acknowledged that staff are a caring team who provide high quality pastoral support and positive learning experiences for children. The school has effective approaches to working in partnership with a range of agencies to support children. These approaches work particularly well in health and wellbeing programmes and have resulted in deepening children's knowledge and awareness of important health issues such as emotional wellbeing. Children are actively involved in the life of the school. Staff relationships with children are very positive and opportunities for children to feel valued and develop friendships across the school, through their involvement in 'Houses' and clubs, is a strength.

The senior management team and all staff work well together to support learning and to meet learning needs. Individual learning plans are reviewed regularly, progress recorded and new targets clearly identified and shared with parents and children.

Children who have English as an additional language or who require additional support are included very well in classes. In most lessons, children's learning needs are well met. Staff provide children with interesting and motivating opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills.

Children in the nursery class are very well supported in their transition to school. Staff share information and review the progress children are making prior to them starting school. The Head Teacher and staff have fostered strong links with St John's High School ensuring children build on their learning when they enter S1.

The report confirmed that the Head Teacher is dedicated and is held in high regard by staff, parents and wider community. She has gained the support of parents, staff and the community. Through the range of approaches she has developed to evaluate the work of the school, she knows the strengths and development needs of the school well. It also confirmed that the caring staff provide high quality pastoral support and positive learning experiences for children.

Staff are committed to developing their skills and further improving curriculum and attainment. Staff work closely with partners, parents and one another to identify when support for children's learning is appropriate. Staff who work with children with additional support needs work effectively as a team and support children and their families very well. Teamwork is strong amongst staff; parents are supportive and children are enthusiastic learners.

We are developing our curriculum which takes cognisance of the seven principles for curriculum design and are beginning to plan using the significant aspects of learning. Staff professional learning will continue to focus on developing a curriculum which responds to the interests of the children when planning learning experiences to continue to motivate and engage all learners. The Senior Management Team is ensuring there is a continual focus on analysis of assessment data with staff and as a result appropriate and effective steps are taken to ensure the quality of learning and teaching continues to raise attainment.

Signed *Michael Wood* Executive Director of Children and Families

Signed *Lina Waghorn* Head of Service (Early Years, Primary, Arts & Culture)

1 December 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**St Mary's RC Primary School and Nursery Class
Dundee City Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including opportunities for children to lead and have a say in their school, how well they are learning and partnerships forged by the school with the wider community and professional agencies. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children have positive learning experiences. Children in the nursery are motivated as learners and are gaining in confidence and independence. Nursery children are developing skills of investigation through learning about a variety of topics and listening to stories. Almost all children in the primary stages are eager to learn and are motivated by their interesting learning activities. They are skilled in sharing ideas together and work confidently in small groups. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children are responding positively to the recognition given to successes at assemblies, displayed on school walls and in learning logs. We have asked staff to continue to develop their approaches to learning and assessment in order to ensure all children understand their next steps and know how to improve. Children are actively involved in the life of the school. Staff relationships with children are very positive, and opportunities for children to feel valued and develop friendships across the school through their involvement in 'Houses' and clubs is a strength. The partnership forged by the school with parents and their children is very positive and has resulted in the development of the attractive outdoor play areas, encouraging active travel and a new cycle shelter. At the primary stages, children are developing their leadership skills well. They take on a variety of roles as 'Club Leaders', 'House Captains' and participate in pupil council and eco committee activities. Children use their enterprising skills and develop their understanding of the needs of others through a variety of fund raising activities for charities. A group of P7 children are particularly proud of their success and achievement through winning the Dundee round of the national Euroquiz.

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Transforming lives through learning

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, most children, including those who have English as an additional language, are making good progress in literacy and English. Most children in the nursery are making good progress in developing listening skills and enjoy using books independently. They are developing awareness of letters in their names and recognise logos in the local environment. At the primary stages, most children listen attentively and talk confidently about their learning. Children's writing is of a good standard and children in P1 to P3 are making a strong start to developing independent writing and word recognition skills. Very good support is provided to children who have additional support needs. Staff ensure all pupils feel valued and well cared for. The school recognises that children across the school are capable of progressing through the Curriculum for Excellence levels in reading and writing at a more consistently brisk pace. At the primary stages and in the nursery class, children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children in the nursery class are learning to recognise numbers and can count and match socks on the washing line. At the primary stages, children are developing confidence in their mental agility and increasing accuracy when making mental calculations. By P7, children talk confidently about applying their numeracy skills and sharing strategies they use to make accurate calculations. However, children's attainment in mathematics can be raised further through expecting children to achieve more through challenges and using digital technologies. Children in the nursery class are developing an understanding of moving safely and confidently when playing outdoors. This could be improved further through increased access to the outdoor play area and introducing more challenging play equipment. At the primary stages, children are making very good progress in developing knowledge and understanding of health and wellbeing. By P7, children are beginning to recognise the relevance of their learning to their future lives and career aspirations.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

At the primary stages and in the nursery class, staff provide a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages children to value one another's achievements and ensures a positive climate for children to learn. Children who have English as an additional language or who require additional support are included very well in classes. In most lessons, children's learning needs are well met. This is most evident when children are supported through activities that are well matched to meet their individual needs. Staff provide well-judged group activities and manage the range of learning needs very well. However, we have asked the school to ensure learning is suitably challenging to meet the needs of all children and that progress is carefully tracked across all stages and the nursery class. Staff work closely with partners, parents and one another to identify when support for children's learning is appropriate. Staff who work with children with additional support needs work effectively as a team and support children and their families very well. The senior management team and support for learning teacher ensure individual learning plans are reviewed regularly, progress recorded and new targets clearly identified and shared with parents and children. The school now needs to develop a clear overview of children's progress so that all children achieve as well as possible.

Staff provide children with interesting and motivating opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. They are developing programmes for all areas of Curriculum

for Excellence and are focusing on literacy and numeracy to ensure children make good progress. We have asked the school to build on its success in improving early literacy and mental agility as models for developing other curriculum areas. In all classes, children have a broad experience across the curriculum. However, the school has not yet developed a systematic approach to ensure all children build on their prior learning and make sufficient progress across all areas. The school should continue to develop the curriculum as planned and ensure a shared understanding of standards and what is to be achieved through the curriculum. The school has effective approaches to working in partnership with a range of agencies to support children. These approaches work particularly well in health and wellbeing programmes and have resulted in deepening children's knowledge and awareness of important health issues such as emotional wellbeing. Children in the nursery class are very well supported in their transition to school. Staff share information and review the progress children are making prior to them starting school. The headteacher and staff have fostered strong links with St John's High School ensuring children build on their learning when they enter S1. They plan to strengthen this further through developing shared understanding of standards to be expected of children by P7.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher has been in post for four years and in that time has gained the support of parents, staff and the community. Through the range of approaches she has developed to evaluate the work of the school, she knows its strengths and development needs well. Staff have successfully created a climate of shared responsibilities and value the ideas and proposals suggested by pupils. Together they have created a positive school ethos. The headteacher has set up a range of improvement groups led by staff and encourages them to take forward the school's improvement priorities. Staff are committed to developing their skills and further improving curriculum and attainment. Approaches to assessing, tracking and monitoring pupil progress is now of high importance to bring about improvements. The headteacher and depute are working together as a senior management team and are now ready to review the school's vision and define what the school is aiming to achieve for children through its curriculum. We have asked the headteacher to consult with all staff, children and parents in planning further improvements to children's learning and achievements. Very effective learning and teaching practices in P6/7 classes are of a high quality and should be shared with others to help improve consistency across all classes. The school has strong capacity to continue improving. Teamwork is strong amongst staff, parents are supportive and children are enthusiastic learners. With continued support from Dundee City Council and high expectations from the senior management team, St Mary's RC Primary School and Nursery Class should continue to improve.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the nursery class had two requirements and two recommendations. From these, two requirements and two recommendations have been met. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and three recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Confident and well-behaved children who are motivated to learn.
- The caring staff team who provide high quality pastoral support and positive learning experiences for children.
- The dedicated headteacher held in high regard by staff, parents and wider community.
- The opportunities and value placed upon children having a say and bringing about positive change to their school.

We discussed with staff and Dundee City Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve the curriculum.
- Improve approaches to tracking and assessing children's progress to ensure attainment is raised.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching across the school and nursery class.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Dundee City Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Dundee City Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/StMarysRCPPrimarySchoolDundeeCity.asp>

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