



**Airyhall School
and Nursery Class
Aberdeen City Council
12 January 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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

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.

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Examples of good practice
4. How well do children learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

1. The school

Airyhall School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the Airyhall, Braeside and Mannofield areas of Aberdeen. The roll was 370, including 59 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in November 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, well-behaved and motivated children who enjoy learning.
- Consistently high standards of attainment in English language and mathematics.
- The high quality of children's learning experiences at the primary stages.
- The promotion of children's health and wellbeing.
- Strong partnership with parents.
- Very effective leadership by the school management team and staff teamwork in improving the school.

3. Examples of good practice

- 'World of Work Week'.
- 'Family' learning activities.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children enjoy nursery. They choose toys and make decisions confidently when playing. All children are learning to form friendships, to share and take turns. They play well together and are kind to each

other. Children enjoy telling people about their learning and achievements. At the primary stages, almost all children are enthusiastic learners. The atmosphere in classes is positive and caring. Children learn actively through direct experience, gaining important skills in learning independently and being creative. They nearly always cooperate effectively during group activities. Children set personal targets for their learning. They can discuss the quality of their own and each other's work and say how they could improve it.

In the nursery class, children are beginning to be creative in activities involving role play, music making, art and craft. They can sing and use simple percussion instruments confidently. Children are developing their understanding of the natural world through the eco programme and can talk about their composting activity. They enjoy pretending to barbecue in their 'jungle' area. They are confident in using the computer and when using a range of wheeled toys in the outdoor area. In the primary classes, most children participate in out-of-class activities which extend their learning and develop their confidence, responsibility and skills of citizenship and leadership. Many children work on school committees, including the pupil council, eco group, rights-respecting school group, and Fairtrade group. Children gain skills and fitness by taking part in after-school sports organised by staff and parents. From nursery upwards, they develop confidence by giving presentations to their peers, parents and visitors. Children's efforts have helped the school achieve impressive awards. These include three green flags from Eco-Schools Scotland, a UNICEF award as a rights-respecting school, and the Diana Award for campaigning against bullying. Children's actions have also helped the school to achieve Fairtrade School status and an excellence award as a Health Promoting School.

In the nursery class, children talk confidently to adults and other children. Almost all listen carefully during group times and stories. Most children can recognise their name in print. A few are beginning to play at writing, for example by taking notes in the construction area and writing postcards. Most children are good at counting to ten and a few can count beyond this. At the primary stages, children are

performing very well in English language and mathematics. Almost all are achieving appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics and a large and growing number are exceeding these levels. Almost all children can speak confidently and listen attentively. They are making very good progress in reading and writing. By P7, they can discuss different kinds of texts, including poetry. From the early stages, children are developing very good skills in writing for different purposes. They give careful attention to grammar, punctuation and spelling. In mathematics, almost all children perform written calculations skilfully and most can do mental calculations well. Children are confident in work involving money, units of measurement, angles and shapes. Their skills in problem solving are well developed. At the upper stages, they are developing their use of spreadsheets on the computer.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Nursery staff are consulting children about their interests. They should continue to develop ways to help children plan and evaluate their learning. Children need further opportunities to develop skills in early literacy and numeracy. The primary curriculum has major strengths. All children benefit from enterprise activities and two hours of quality physical education each week. Novel features include a 'world of work' week where children learn about the relevance of their school work to adults' jobs. Each week, children enjoy working in P1 to P7 'families' to face different challenges and learn new skills. Staff are following a well-planned approach to implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. In doing so, they should continue to develop curricular links with Hazlehead Academy.

Across all classes, teachers and support staff know children well as individuals and help them effectively with their learning. Nursery staff observe children learning and are gaining skill in planning what each child should learn next. In the primary classes, teachers match activities carefully to children's learning needs in English language and mathematics. They do this less well in other curriculum areas. In a

minority of lessons, children's progress in learning is too slow at times. The support for learning teacher works well with children who require additional help. The two depute headteachers provide further support and effectively assist groups of children who require more challenging tasks. Children with additional support needs are making good or very good progress. Teachers explain things clearly and are improving their questioning to develop children's thinking. In most cases, they focus well on the main purposes of each lesson. Staff should extend the feedback they give children to help develop their learning across the curriculum. Children benefit from regular and varied homework.

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

Staff work closely with external support services to meet children's needs. The Parent Council and the parent-teacher association are very supportive. Around 40 parents serve as parent helpers. Many contribute their skills at learning events, such as 'world of work' week. The school actively seeks and responds to parents' views about the school. It manages any complaints effectively. Parents receive helpful advice leaflets about various aspects of children's learning and wellbeing. Children's personal learning plans help to inform parents about their children's learning and achievements. Children can usefully discuss their progress alongside their parents at parents' evenings. The timing of written reports to parents is under review. Parents are positive about the helpfulness of the nursery's open day. The local minister contributes to children's religious and moral education and religious observance.

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

Many children actively contribute to the school's achievements by working on groups and committees. Children speak knowledgeably and positively about these groups. Older children support younger

ones by serving as buddies and sports leaders. Staff regularly seek children's views about school, including their learning, and use this information effectively to make improvements. Children have increasing choice in what they learn. All staff reflect carefully on their work. Teachers share their ideas and expertise very effectively. They welcome advice and respond quickly by making improvements. School improvement plans impact very positively on children's achievements and wellbeing. The senior management team closely monitors the work of the school and provides helpful feedback to staff. They should ensure that lessons are always suitably challenging and that children progress fast enough in their learning.

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

Staff set high expectations of children's behaviour. They praise children when they do well and celebrate their many achievements. Almost all children behave very well and act responsibly. They relate very positively to staff and are caring towards each other. Staff strongly promote children's health, wellbeing and safety. Children have easy ways to report any worries. Almost all staff in contact with children are trained in child protection. Children are treated fairly by staff and all are included equally in the life of the school. Staff take good opportunities to celebrate the culture and languages of children who come from other countries. Children are developing positive attitudes to the needs of others through links with a school in Sierra Leone. They learn effectively about diversity and equality through Airyhall's status as a rights-respecting school.

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

The headteacher has high aspirations for the school and provides a very clear direction for its development. Staff share her vision for continuous improvement. She has guided the school very effectively through a merger with another school, followed by a move to a new building. The senior management team, which includes two depute

headteachers and a principal teacher, provides very effective leadership. Staff are enthusiastic and work very well as a team to improve the school. Teaching and non-teaching staff willingly adopt leadership roles in curriculum development, running clubs and activities, and supporting pupil groups. The staff's efforts have a major impact on the quality of children's achievements.

9. What happens next?

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's self-evaluation to make its evaluations and the school agreed with these evaluations at an early stage of the inspection. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more.

The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, 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.

- In the nursery, continue to improve opportunities for children to develop skills in early literacy and numeracy.
- In nursery and primary classes, ensure that lessons are always suitably challenging and that children progress fast enough in their learning.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements or recommendations.

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 Airyhall School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	very 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	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Tom Straiton
12 January 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

If you would like to find out more about our inspections or get an electronic copy of this report, please go to www.hmie.gov.uk.

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation, or if you wish to comment about any aspect of our inspections. You can contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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.

Crown Copyright 2010
HM Inspectorate of Education