



**Airlie Primary School and
Nursery Class
Angus Council
22 March 2011**

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

Airlie Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the small villages of Airlie, Kirkton of Airlie, Craigton of Airlie and the surrounding rural areas. The roll was 57, including seven in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in February 2011. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2009/2010.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Highly-motivated and confident children who are keen to share their learning.
- Staff interaction with children in the nursery.
- The close links with nearby schools and the contribution of parents and the Active Schools coordinator which encourage the overall achievement of all children.
- The involvement of children, staff and parents in developing the school grounds for fun and learning.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, all children are motivated learners. All have formed friendships. They choose activities with confidence and concentrate very well with minimum adult support. They share their ideas about learning by contributing to mind maps and floor books. At the primary stages, almost all children enjoy learning at school. They work well in pairs and in small groups. Their interests and existing knowledge are used well to develop topic work. Children are increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve their work further.

Children in the nursery class are developing good levels of independence through activities such as dressing for outdoor play, helping to prepare snack and tidying up at the end of the session. Almost all children can discuss the importance of making healthy choices. Their physical skills in balancing and climbing are developing well through the use of the exciting outdoor equipment. Across the

primary stages, children contribute well to the life of the school by undertaking a wide range of responsibilities. These include membership of the pupil council and eco committee, and as playground activity leaders and Junior Road Safety Officers. Children have worked successfully with adults to develop the school grounds to support play, fitness and environmental activities. Most children enjoy participating in the popular after-school clubs.

In the nursery class, children are making very good progress in their learning. They listen and talk confidently to adults and to each other. They enjoy sharing books with adults. All children recognise their name in print. Most can write their own name and a few are beginning to recognise letters and sounds. Children are confident when using numbers during their play. The majority show an understanding of simple addition. In recent years, most children at the primary stages have attained appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics. The majority has done so in writing. In English language, most children listen very well to others. They talk clearly and articulately. Most children read regularly for pleasure and to find information related to topic work. While the majority of children write well, they need to write more often and at greater length. In reading and writing, children need to experience a wider range of texts. In mathematics, almost all children are confident when finding information from tables. They need more opportunities to undertake real-life surveys and display information. Across the stages, most children are quick and accurate when undertaking mental calculations. At all stages, they are confident when working with money. Children in the upper stages are less secure when discussing the properties of shapes or identifying angles.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff make very good use of children's interests and ideas when planning learning. Staff provide a wealth of interesting opportunities to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills during imaginative play, investigative activities and visits in the local community. At the primary stages, staff are making good use of

Curriculum for Excellence to plan learning. Literacy skills are developed effectively during interesting topic work. For example, in the upper stages, children are undertaking research into the solar system and presenting their findings to others. Staff are skilled at helping children to understand the practical use of numeracy skills in every day life. Staff should provide children with more opportunities to develop their information and communications technology skills across a range of curricular areas. Teachers build well on the strong practice of visiting specialist staff of music and physical education. Children do not yet benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Across the school, health promotion has a high profile.

Nursery staff meet children's learning and development needs very well. Staff provide a caring and very supportive environment in which all children feel relaxed and happy. Staff plan stimulating activities which encourage children to ask questions and think for themselves. All children make very good progress. At the primary stages, teachers know children very well. In most lessons, staff match activities effectively to children's learning needs. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. However, children are given too long to complete some tasks and this slows progress. Staff work well together to identify and support children who need additional help, including able children, in the nursery and primary classes. Support for learning staff provide helpful support to individuals. Children and parents should be involved more in the setting of targets for children who have individualised educational programmes. Homework is regular but not sufficiently varied.

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

Staff have formed strong links with the local community, examples include the cricket club, the police, an organic farm and an art gallery. The Active Schools coordinator organises useful training to help parents run a wide range of sports clubs. Parents are very supportive of the school. The Parent Council organises successful fundraising

and social events. Parents also work very closely with staff and children to improve the school grounds. Nursery staff encourage parents to share their skills by taking part in baking and art activities. 'Wiggly Books' are used well to share children's progress on an on-going basis. At the primary stages, parents receive informative annual written reports on their children's progress. Parents welcome the recent introduction of helpful home-link jotters. They receive information on the health education programme. However, they do not receive enough information about other aspects of the curriculum or how to support their children's learning. Almost all parents are happy with the school and feel that any concerns will be dealt with appropriately. From nursery onwards, staff work closely with nearby schools to provide children with regular opportunities to meet for social and educational events. This contact develops children's confidence and social skills very well as they move from stage to stage and on to secondary school.

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

Staff have responded enthusiastically to opportunities to develop their teaching skills in order to make learning more interesting. They are beginning to make effective use of visits to other classes to share good practice. They have worked well with children on eco activities. A recent initiative to improve children's literacy skills has good potential. Staff are increasingly taking responsibility for leading identified developments. This shared leadership of school improvement should be encouraged further. The headteacher visits the nursery and primary classes frequently. She now needs to ensure that monitoring activities leads to continued improvement. Children contribute well to improving their school through their involvement in various committees.

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

Staff and children are very proud of their school. Relationships between staff and children are positive and marked by mutual respect. Children are encouraged to do their best and their achievements are celebrated at assembly, on wall displays and in newsletters. All staff are clear about their responsibilities to keep all children safe. Almost all children feel that there is an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns. There are appropriate arrangements for religious observance. Good use is made of assemblies to develop children's understanding of equality issues using the United Nations children's charter as a basis for discussion.

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

The school has a clear sense of direction. The headteacher has worked well with staff to create a caring and safe learning environment. She has an accurate overview of the school's strengths and areas for development. She has taken positive steps to develop the curriculum and enhance staff skills. The education authority has provided highly-effective support for these developments. The staff team should now involve children and parents more fully in evaluating the quality of education and identifying priorities for future improvement. In view of the strong commitment of staff and parents to the children, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the good quality of education provided by the school, 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.

- Continue to improve children's writing.
- Provide parents with better information about the curriculum and how to support their children's learning.
- Involve children and parents fully in identifying and addressing school improvement priorities.

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 Airlie Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very 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: Anne Park
22 March 2011

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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