



**St Mary's Primary School
Clydebank
West Dunbartonshire
Council
8 June 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMI) 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

St Mary's Primary School is a denominational school. It serves the Duntocher, Hardgate and Old Kilpatrick areas of Clydebank. The roll was 360 when the inspection was carried out in April 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Welcoming and positive ethos.
- Confident, articulate children who are enthusiastic about their learning.
- Staff teamwork in promoting and recognising children's wider achievements.
- Relationships with parents and the community to support children's learning.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are eager to learn. They contribute very well to the life of the school and community. Children are positive about ways to take responsibility and can describe how the school is helping them to become more confident. They make good use of information and communications technology to support their learning. For example, children at P7 presented information about endangered animals using animation. In the most successful lessons, children are highly motivated through stimulating tasks which encourage them to be actively involved in their learning. However, this is not consistent across all classes. Children are not always fully aware of their strengths as learners or what they need to do to make their learning better.

Children achieve very well across a wide range of activities both in and outwith school. They are enthusiastic about their success in local and national competitions, including sports and the Euro quiz. Children are developing confidence through presenting their musical and acting

abilities at school shows and events. They demonstrate their citizenship skills effectively. For example, at P7 children helped to highlight 'Stronger and Safer Scotland' through a public debate. Children have a sound awareness of environmental issues. For example, those at P7 sent their work on climate change and pollution to the United Nations Conference. As a result, the school has achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland silver award. At the upper stages, children are developing their skills in French well.

Children's progress in English language and mathematics is good. Almost all children achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and mathematics and most do so in writing. In recent years, standards of attainment have remained steady. In English language, children readily share their views. They give oral presentations confidently to a variety of audiences. Children read fluently and show a sound understanding of texts. They discuss features of books well. Across the school, children write for a range of purposes. They do not always write consistently well. Children take pride in their written work. In mathematics, most children carry out written calculations well. They are developing their accuracy in performing mental calculations. A few children are not certain about aspects of measurement. Children are secure in applying problem solving strategies in a variety of real-life contexts.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school is reviewing its curriculum to take account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff are developing ways for children to link learning across different areas of the curriculum. They are beginning to provide children with opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Children's learning is enhanced through increased opportunities to learn in real-life contexts. Staff do not plan enough ways to develop children's creativity and a sufficiently broad range of skills in art. Children's learning is made more interesting through a range of visits to the local area and visitors to the school. Children do not yet receive two of hours of high-quality physical education each week.

Staff meet children's learning needs well. Most tasks and activities are at the right level of difficulty for children. At times, the pace of learning is not quick enough, particularly for higher-achieving children. Staff provide good support to children requiring help with their learning. There are appropriate procedures in place to identify children who need additional help. Most targets in individualised education plans are clear and help children make progress in their learning. Additional staff members and learning assistants provide helpful support to children requiring help with their learning. Staff share the purpose of lessons with children and give clear instructions and explanations. They use questioning well to encourage children. The school is aware of the need to ensure homework is more varied.

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

The Parent Council is highly supportive of the school. Parents receive helpful information about their children's progress through written reports. The school communicates regularly with parents through newsletters, the school magazine and website. Parents are involved in their child's learning in a variety of ways. For example, helping with class activities, the school garden and school trips. A few parents used their expertise to raise children's awareness of different careers. The school has appropriate procedures in place for dealing with complaints. Staff have strong links with the community to enhance children's learning. For example, children have worked with members of the Dalmuir credit union to develop their knowledge of financial education. The school works well with a range of other agencies, including the family support worker, psychological services and visual impairment services to help support children's learning. There are appropriate arrangements in place for children moving to P1 and those at P7 moving to St Peter the Apostle High School.

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

Children are positive about their role in helping to improve the school community through, for example, committees, maintaining class gardens and taking responsibility for displaying work on noticeboards. The pupil council meets regularly and has improved playground activities. Staff are committed to improving the work of the school using self-evaluation. They welcome opportunities to visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and improve their own teaching. The management team have a range of approaches in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. These include reviewing teaching plans, looking at children's work, visiting classes to observe learning and tracking children's progress. They are now providing staff with more focused feedback. These approaches are not yet thorough enough to ensure consistently high-quality learning and teaching.

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

The school has a very positive ethos. Staff, parents and children are proud of their school. Children are polite, engaging and very well behaved. They treat each other, staff and visitors to the school with courtesy. Relationships between staff and children are strong. Most children feel they are treated fairly and with respect. Children respond well to high expectations staff set for behaviour. Teachers now need to set higher expectations of what children can achieve. Staff show care and concern for children's wellbeing. They are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection. The school recognises and celebrates effectively children's successes both within and outwith school, including as part of wall displays, newspaper articles, photographs and a trophy cabinet. The parish priest plays an active role in the life of the school. Children are learning to care for others and learn about equality issues through organising a variety of events to raise funds for charity. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

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

The headteacher is well respected by staff, parents and children. She has worked with them to create a shared vision for the school. The headteacher is well supported by the depute headteachers and principal teacher. Together, they have identified accurately aspects of the work of the school which require improvement. Staff work well together as a team. They take on leadership roles within and beyond the classroom, including leading working parties. Teachers are confident about trying out new ideas in their classroom. By building on its strengths, the school is well placed to improve further.

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 in connection with 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 take forward *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Build on examples of successful learning and teaching to ensure children's learning needs are being met fully.
- Extend approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school in order raise attainment.

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 St Mary's Primary School.

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

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Janie McManus

8 June 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

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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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