

**St Columbkille's Primary School
Rutherglen
South Lanarkshire Council**

26 April 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 <http://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.

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1. The school

St Columbkille's Primary School is a denominational school. It serves the Rutherglen central, Burnhill, Eastfield, Burnside and part of Kings Park areas of Rutherglen. The roll was 356 when the inspection was carried out in February 2011. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2009/2010.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, well-behaved children with a great enthusiasm for learning.
- Clear commitment of the headteacher and all staff to the provision of a strong catholic community of faith.
- Respect created between the children and staff which supports high-quality learning experiences.
- High level of parental support for the life and work of the school.
- The development of links with business and the local community.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, almost all children are motivated and enjoy their learning. They communicate well with each other, and demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Most work well on tasks and activities without close supervision. They feel safe and well cared for. Staff know the children well and they make good use of a range of strategies to assist learning. Children use their knowledge from prior learning. For example, in P6, children are able to explain clearly and with understanding how they use the hatchery as part of their 'Clyde in the Classroom' project. Children's learning in health and safety has been enhanced by an innovative partnership with a local engineering company.

Most children achieve well across their learning activities. Children develop leadership and communication skills through their involvement as playground buddies, junior road safety officers and as eco and health committee members. Children are increasing their physical skills from participation in a variety of school sports. This includes cross-country running, athletics and football. In the performing arts, children in P7 have achieved a very high standard of work from their participation in a Burns' competition.

Overall, attainment in reading and mathematics is very good. However, attainment in writing has headroom for improvement. Almost all children achieve appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics and the majority achieve these levels in writing. There has been a significant dip in attainment in writing last session with a number of children not achieving national levels. In English language, listening skills are good and children are confident and skilled when talking in groups. Children read well with fluency and understanding. The school has promoted the enjoyment of reading together, through a special initiative using a wide range of texts. In writing, most children write well for a range of purposes. However, their progress needs to be followed and recorded more systematically. In mathematics, children enjoy learning with a good range of resources. They are encouraged to share their thinking about mathematics with each other. Almost all children in the early years are secure when counting and using even and odd numbers. Children enjoy using their mathematical skills in real-life contexts. Throughout the school, work across subjects is being developed to support learning. Children improve their fitness in very fast-paced physical education lessons, which use an exciting variety of activities. In religious education, children have a very good understanding of Roman Catholic Christianity and are continuing to develop their knowledge of other world religions. In learning Spanish, children in P6/7 are developing basic conversation skills.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Across the school, children have a broad and balanced curriculum that provides good opportunities for creativity and challenge. This includes using games to extend challenge and enjoyment. Staff have made a good start to reviewing plans and teaching approaches by using Curriculum for Excellence. All children benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education each week. Health and wellbeing are promoted through the health committee and a variety of physical activities. This should be developed further throughout the school community. The curriculum is enhanced through approaches to outdoor learning. The school uses a range of information and communications technology, such as, digital cameras to enhance children's learning in various areas of the curriculum. This also includes the use of Glow, Scotland's national schools' intranet.

In most lessons, teachers plan appropriate tasks and activities to match children's needs. Children are supported in their learning by a nurturing atmosphere across all areas of the school which helps to remove barriers to learning. In a few lessons, expectations of what children can achieve are too low. There needs to be a clearer use of assessment to inform the teaching of writing. Senior staff observe learning. They do not use this information well enough to plan children's next steps in learning and ensure they make appropriate progress. The support for learning teacher works well with class teachers to enable children with additional support needs to make progress. Appropriate individualised learning plans and specialist support are provided where needed. Support staff provide good support but this needs to be more targeted, and learning targets need to be shared more with all staff, to help children make better progress. There were examples of highly effective

teaching in most classes. Homework is set regularly, but children feel this can provide greater challenge and variety, especially for more able learners.

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

The school has effective partnerships with local businesses and parents. The Parent Council is highly supportive of the work of the school. The Parent Teacher Association raise considerable funds and participate in various social events for children. Parents are complimentary about the work of the school. They feel the headteacher takes account of their views. Staff provide parents with an informative written report on their children's progress. Parents are informed about sensitive aspects of health education and consulted about changes to the school curriculum at open afternoons. Staff are very good at sorting out any concerns or complaints. The school works well with staff from Trinity High School to support children as they move from primary to secondary.

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

Children are well behaved and polite. They maintain very good relationships with their teachers. There is a clear sense that staff want to improve children's learning. They are reflective about their work and this helps to strengthen learning and teaching. The senior management visit classes to observe children. However, these visits need to be focussed better on particular aspects of learning and teaching. The school improvement plan has improved children's learning experiences. Children identify strongly with their school. They are encouraged and supported to take responsibility across the school through their involvement in the pupil council, and by leadership within the school's house system. Older children help younger children in the playground and in the classroom. Staff would benefit from more opportunities to collaborate and on occasion to change classes to develop and enhance their teaching ideas. Staff should continue to develop the leadership skills of every child.

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

The school is welcoming and has a very positive ethos. Children feel safe and valued in the school. Staff know children and their families well. They treat all children with respect and dignity. Children are very friendly, polite and almost all have high expectations of themselves. All staff make keeping children safe a very high priority. Children's achievements are celebrated in assemblies and displayed to a very high standard around the school. Staff promote and celebrate equality and diversity through assemblies and from work in religious and moral education. The school provides very good opportunities for religious observance in church and at school assemblies. The parish priests and staff provide valuable support for children to prepare them for the sacraments.

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

The headteacher is highly committed to the school, the children and their families. She has earned the respect of parents, staff and pupils through her creation of a positive environment in the school and the wider school community. The headteacher is supported by two depute headteachers who are leading effectively aspects of curriculum development. Together with a highly caring and committed staff they are developing the curriculum, taking account of Curriculum for Excellence. Parents and children contribute well to the school's aims and play a large part in improvements. All staff should develop their leadership roles further through taking more responsibility for coordinating aspects of the work of the school. The school has the capacity to continue to improve further.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, 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. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in learners' achievement.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to improve attainment in writing by developing a consistent approach across all stages.
- Improve the monitoring and tracking of children's progress to ensure that the needs of all children are met.
- Develop further approaches to self-evaluation to ensure continuing school improvement.

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 Columbkille's Primary School

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Aileen Monaghan
26 April 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 <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/> or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Footnotes

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.