

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 29 JULY 2009

REPORT ON: HMIE INSPECTION OF CRAIGOWL PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 375-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the findings of the HMIE Inspection of Craigowl Primary School and Nursery Class.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) note the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Director of Education 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 Craigowl Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in February 2009. They published a report on their findings on 5 May 2009. At the time of the inspection the roll was 568, including 56 in the nursery.

4.2 HMIE identified the following key strengths of the school:

- the school's success in meeting the needs of children, including those with additional support needs
- children's behaviour and their enthusiasm for learning
- the strong sense of care and mutual respect between staff and children
- the teamwork and commitment of staff in preparation for the merger, drawing on the best practice from Brackens and Macalpine Schools
- the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, and the contribution of staff to school improvement

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

- improve the tracking of children's progress and further raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics
- continue to develop systems to support effective communication

- increase the involvement of children, parents and the local community in school improvement
- in the nursery, make more use of observations of children at play to plan next steps in learning

4.4 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 HMIE reports a six-point scale for reporting performance:

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

4.4.2 The following quality indicators from "How Good Is Our School 3" (HGIOS 3) were evaluated:

Quality Indicator	Nursery	Primary
Improvements in performance	Good	Good
Learners' experiences	Good	Good
Meeting learning needs	Good	Very Good
The curriculum	Good	Good
Improvement through self-evaluation	Good	Good

4.5 The School Improvement Plan (2009-2012) includes a strong focus on these areas for improvement. These will be regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated in line with both the school and authority quality improvement calendars.

4.6 HMIE have indicated that they are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a consequence, they will make no further visits following this inspection. The school and education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education within 2 years.

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.

5.2 There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 The following Background Papers were relied upon in preparation of this Report:
- HMIE Report: Craigowl Primary School and Nursery Class, Dundee City Council, 5th May 2009.

Jim Collins
Director of Education

14 July 2009

JC/LW

***Craigowl Primary School
Dundee City Council***

5 May 2009

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the 'ethos' of the school. By 'ethos' we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school's aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school's success in achieving these 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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

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1. The school

Craigowl Primary School is a new non-denominational school with a nursery class. It opened in August 2008 following the merger of Brackens and Macalpine Primary Schools. It serves the north west of Dundee. The roll was 568, including 56 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in February 2009. The school also offered enhanced provision for children with additional support needs.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The school's success in meeting the needs of children, including those with additional support needs.
- Children's behaviour and their enthusiasm for learning.
- The strong sense of care and mutual respect between staff and children.
- The teamwork and commitment of staff in preparation for the merger, drawing on the best practice from Brackens and Macalpine Schools.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, and the contribution of staff to school improvement.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery, children are forming friendships and cooperate well with each other during play activities. Most children are interested in a wide range of activities and some can concentrate on tasks for an extended period of time. Their literacy and numeracy skills are developing well. They enjoy listening to stories and most recognise their own name in print. Children are beginning to recognise and match numbers up to ten. In primary classes, almost all children are motivated and work well with others to tackle tasks set by teachers. Encouraged by staff, children are developing an awareness of their strengths as learners. They are proud of their achievements in a variety of activities. At all stages children are developing effective enterprise skills. For example, they have organised events to support charities and to raise funding for outings and games. In the upper stages, children enjoy taking part in the lunchtime and after-school sport activities which include athletics, football, badminton and basketball. Children are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Those who need additional help with their learning are making very good progress towards their targets. Children listen well to adults and to each other when working with a partner or in groups. In the middle and upper stages, they talk with confidence for example when identifying issues to investigate during topic work. They are enthusiastic about Scottish poetry and those attending the poetry club are keen to recite to an audience. At P1 to P3, children read well to find information and most read widely at home. Standards of spelling, punctuation and handwriting are good in the middle and upper stages. At P7, the recent visit to Edinburgh provided the stimulus for detailed accounts of the day. In mathematics, almost all children are developing a sound grasp of number facts. At the early stages, they enjoy learning about money during play activities. From nursery onwards, information and communications technology skills are developing very well. Children confidently use a digital camera, edit text and present the findings of surveys.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, children's learning experiences are firmly based on play. Staff should now work with primary staff to plan for the implementation of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. At the primary stages, staff have successfully created a curriculum that is broad and balanced with continuity from stage to stage. Well developed programmes are in place and teachers are clear as to expectations. Staff provide children with activities, such as the nine o'clock challenge, which help them think for themselves. Events such as multicultural week and class topics help children learn about valuing other cultures. The school has yet to ensure that all children receive two hours of physical education each week and that all P6 and P7 children learn a modern language.

Staff in the nursery are sensitive to children's individual needs. Tasks and activities meet the needs of most children although some would benefit from more demanding work. Staff now need to observe children more carefully during free play activities to ensure provision meets their needs. The information that is gathered should then be used to ensure that children's interests are further developed. In primary classes, senior managers and staff meet children's needs very effectively. Staff know children and their families very well. They work hard to create and sustain a supportive environment for learning. Staff vary the structure of teaching sessions and the types of activities to maintain children's interest. Teachers are skilled at explaining to children what they expect them to learn. They provide high quality feedback to help children improve. At P7, the highly effective team teaching arrangements ensure that children are not disadvantaged by the current accommodation arrangements. At most stages, teachers organise varied and interesting homework that supports what children are learning in class. Staff have effective procedures in place to identify learning needs. Teachers and support staff work very well together to support children who are having difficulties with their learning. These children are making clear progress towards meeting their individual targets for learning. Senior managers have a thorough knowledge of children and their individual circumstances. They provide children and families with strong support.

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

Staff work well with a range of visiting specialist teachers and sports coaches. They have highly effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies including health and social work. These partnerships have been very successful in providing effective support for children experiencing a range of difficulties. The supportive Parent Council offers helpful advice on new policies and procedures. Staff keep parents well informed of children's behaviour through the use of weekly praise records. The school recognises that it is still at an early stage of involving parents in their children's learning and in school improvement. Staff ensured a smooth transition for children into the new Craigowl Primary School in August. They are now putting arrangements for effective transitions from nursery to primary and from primary to secondary school in place. The nursery has appropriate arrangements for managing complaints. The school should now introduce similar systems to ensure that any complaints are recorded and dealt with promptly.

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

Staff work very well together to improve the school. They contribute enthusiastically and lead working parties to develop aspects of the work of the school. Staff are open and honest in their evaluation of provision and cooperate to bring about improvement. Children are beginning to undertake a range of responsibilities such as Craigowl Chums and road safety officers. With support from staff, the pupil council has started to meet. Children have identified the need for improvement in arrangements in the dining hall. Senior managers are working with the pupil council to address these concerns.

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

Children learn in a caring and supportive environment. They make very good use of the breakfast club and healthy tuck shop. They are polite and well behaved. Relationships between staff and children are very positive. Staff treat children fairly and are knowledgeable about child protection procedures. Children's achievements are celebrated in class and at assembly. Staff should strengthen arrangements to ensure that children who reach national attainment levels early maintain their rate of progress.

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

The staff at Craigowl Primary School have risen to the challenge of managing the merger of two schools. They have established shared aims and values which they are committed to achieving. The highly motivated staff provide high quality learning experiences. They are confident when trying out new approaches to teaching and learning. The headteacher has played a key role in effectively managing the many changes faced by the school community. When problems arise he works openly with others to find solutions. The depute headteachers carry out their roles well helping to ensure the high standards of behaviour and care of children are maintained. The management team work closely with staff to plan children's learning. They have made a good start to developing a system to track children's progress. The management team and staff are all actively involved in identifying the school's strengths and the areas it wants to improve. They are well placed to implement their plans for further improvement.

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 following 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.

- Improve the tracking of children's progress and further raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Continue to develop systems to support effective communication.
- Increase the involvement of children, parents and the local community in school improvement.
- In the nursery, make more use of observations of children at play to plan next steps in learning.

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 Craigowl Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

HM Inspector: Anne Park

5 May 2009

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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

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

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Footnotes

1. The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.
2. Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.