

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 DECEMBER 2015

REPORT ON: EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMI) INSPECTION OF MILL OF MAINS PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 455-2015

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of Education Scotland (HMI) following an inspection at Mill of Mains Primary School.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report; and
- ii) instructs the Executive Director of Children and Families Service 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 Mill of Mains Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland (HMI) in May 2015. They published a report on their findings on 25 August 2015. At the time of the inspection 289 children were on the primary school roll.

4.2 The inspectors identified the following strengths of the school:

- Polite, well behaved children who are eager to learn and participate in all aspects of school life.
- Committed staff team who are determined to improve children's experiences and attainment.
- Effective engagement with partners to support children facing challenges in their learning and lives.

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

- Continue to improve the curriculum to ensure children make suitable progress in all aspects of their learning.
- Continue to develop learning and teaching to ensure a high quality experience for all children at all stages.
- Ensure that approaches to self-evaluation result in improvements for children's learning.

4.4 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 Education Scotland (HMI) reports using a six-point scale for reporting performance:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate/satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

4.4.2 The following quality evaluations were given at this inspection:

Quality Indicator	Primary School	Nursery Class
Improvements in performance	Satisfactory	Good
Learners' experiences	Good	Good
Meeting learning needs	Good	Good
	For both the school (and nursery class)	
The curriculum	Weak	
Improvement through self-evaluation	Satisfactory	

- 4.5 HMI indicated that they are satisfied with the overall quality of provision at Mill of Mains Primary and are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, they will make no further visits in connection with this inspection and the Area Lead Officer will work with Dundee City Council to build capacity for improvement. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, Dundee City Council will inform parents about the school's progress.
- 4.6 Education Scotland has issued increased expectations every session since 2011 for Quality Indicators 5.1 The Curriculum and 5.9 Self Evaluation. The school reflected against the increased expectations effectively through their self evaluation and acknowledged the areas where they need to continue to develop.
- 4.7 In relation to The Curriculum, there is a greater focus on tracking progress across the Broad General Education and this is being supported by recent National developments such as the draft National Improvement Framework. There is also a strong emphasis on the early years and ensuring smooth transitions across all stages. The evaluations reflect the National context as well as the local context and the Local Authority is working with Education Scotland to support the school in its progress in this regard.
- 4.8 In relation to self evaluation, there is a greater focus on every member of staff taking responsibility for their own career long professional learning and engagement in Professional Update, which has just been implemented nationally in the last session. As such schools are shifting the culture and raising the profile of professional learning. There is also a greater focus on leadership at all levels. The Education Manager and the Education Officer will continue to monitor the progress and identify appropriate professional learning opportunities and support as required.

- 4.9 Mill of Mains Primary School's *School Improvement Plan (2015-2018)* already includes a focus on the identified areas for improvement. These will be regularly reviewed, monitored and evaluated in line with both the school and the local authority's quality improvement calendars. The attached appendix gives an analysis of the report and outlines improvements made to date.
- 4.10 The Children and Families Service regularly analyse the results of inspections and internal Quality Assurance procedures to identify areas for support and work closely with Education Scotland to deliver appropriate professional learning for staff at all levels to ensure continuous improvement.

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. There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

MICHAEL WOOD
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

December 2015

Dundee City Council
Education Department
Scrutiny Committee Report Summary Notes
Inspection and Reporting

Inspection Agency	HMI
Report Publication Date	25 August 2015

Name of Establishment	Mill of Mains Primary School
Sector	Primary
Name of Head Teacher	Mrs Vivienne Snee
Roll	266

Inspection Outcomes

Quality Indicator	Primary	Nursery	Secondary
1.1 Improvements in Performance	Satisfactory	Good	
2.1 Learners' Experiences	Good	Good	
5.1 Meeting Learning Needs	Good	Good	
5.1 The Curriculum	Weak		
5.9 Improvement Through Self-Evaluation	Satisfactory		

The report uses the following word scale:

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

Key Strength

Polite, well behaved children who are eager to learn and participate in all aspects of school life.
Committed staff team who are determined to improve children's experiences and attainment.
Effective engagement with partners to support children facing challenges in their learning and lives.

Areas for Improvement and Action

Continue to improve the curriculum to ensure children make suitable progress in all aspects of their learning.
Continue to develop learning and teaching to ensure a high quality experience for all children at all stages.
Ensure that approaches to self-evaluation result in improvements for children's learning.

Analysis of Report

The School Improvement Plan 2015/16 reflects ongoing areas for improvement and action and provides a clear strategic focus for school improvement. The findings of the HMI Inspection will be taken into account in this first year of the new three year plan and will inform the new School Improvement Plan. The report reflects the evidence gathered to inform our priorities and our identified areas for improvement for the 2015 / 2018 plan. It is also consistent with the outcomes of the school's Extended Review by the Education Department in 2015.

It was recognised that children are eager to learn and are proud of their school. Children in the nursery are developing their skills well in mathematics and are making suitable progress in developing their language skills. Staff are continuing to develop literacy with a clear focus on ABC and Beyond and they are also extending literacy activities for children when they are playing outdoors. Children in the primary stages are making satisfactory progress with language and literacy and staff give pupils regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes. Staff are developing a more consistent approach to listening and talking activities. Pupils are also making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics and staff are now working on providing breadth of learning and appropriate challenge. Staff are developing their use of the local area in the delivery of the Broad General Education, particularly when planning for Interdisciplinary Learning. All children and staff are involved in the Daily Mile and Restorative Approaches are used effectively to resolve disagreements.

Staff work well together to provide a caring and welcoming environment. Nursery staff are ensuring that play activities are sufficiently challenging for children and allow them to assess and take risks in a safe environment. The majority of staff plan learning well to meet the needs of individual pupils and support staff are deployed to support the learning and wellbeing of all children. The school has very effective approaches to working in partnership with key agencies to support children.

The report noted that progress in developing Curriculum for Excellence has been too slow and this has led to there being a fresh focus on curricular development to ensure that children have a broader range of curricular activities across the 4 contexts for learning. All stakeholders are now being consulted in developing a curriculum rationale. Plans are in place to develop clear curricular pathways for discrete subjects and to refresh the contexts for learning across the school making them more relevant for pupils at Mill of Mains Primary School.

The report stated that the head teacher is a confident caring leader who listens well to the views of all stakeholders. The staff work well as a team and openly welcome opportunities to improve their skills. They reflect on their practice using self-evaluation tools to identify priorities for themselves and the school. The SMT and staff are using assessment data more effectively to track and analyse children's progress in literacy and numeracy and this is beginning to have an impact on attainment.

Signed



Executive Director of Children and Families

Signed



Head of Service (Early Years, Primary, Arts & Culture)

25 August 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Mill of Mains Primary School and Nursery Class
Dundee City Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including approaches to behaviour management and the development of improved numeracy skills. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the nursery and primary stages, children are interested and keen to learn. They are very proud of their school and eager to talk about school life. Children in the nursery class play well together, share toys and are developing their knowledge of daily routines. They readily choose activities from a selection across the playroom and in the easily accessed outside area. Children enjoy being creative, for example designing and decorating a castle made of cardboard boxes, and deciding with staff how to develop a hospital play area. Across the primary stages children are polite and well behaved. In most lessons, they listen well to staff and each other, and work confidently on their own and in pairs and small groups. Most children are capable of working well without close supervision. There is scope for staff to offer children more independence and allow more time to work on tasks without interruption. Most children are clear about the activities they are asked to complete. We have asked staff to support children to better understand the skills they are developing and the purpose of their learning. In a few classes, teacher's explanations and instructions are too long when children are eager to commence their activity. In the best examples, staff support children well in reflecting on their successes, and in choosing next steps in learning. This effective practice should be shared and developed across the school. Children in middle and upper stages are confident using computers to present their work and search the Internet effectively. However, at all stages, children should have more frequent access to a wider range of digital technologies in their learning. The school has begun to develop partnerships to support learning. This recently included a visit from the Challenger Education team, who helped children learn about religious and moral education, including the life and work of Mary Slessor. Children's success in sports and other activities is highlighted at assembly and in photo displays. Managers recognise the need to record children's achievements to help children

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Transforming lives through learning

become more aware of the important skills they develop from learning activities in and out of school.

Most children in the nursery are making suitable progress in developing their language and literacy skills. They engage well in conversations, listen well and enjoy listening to stories and rhymes. A few use story books independently and most are developing their knowledge of the language and layout of books during 'together times'. Children show an interest in early writing and a few are making the link between the written and spoken word. They enjoy investigating early mark-making and help create shopping lists to order snack items. To support improvement in children's learning we have asked staff in the nursery to extend literacy activities for children when playing outdoors and in the playroom. Children in the nursery are developing their understanding of mathematics well through play, for example in songs, rhymes and counting games. They use tape measures to compare the length of bricks in their model making and use sand timers to monitor time spent using the smart-board. At the primary stages children are making satisfactory progress in reading and writing and in numeracy and mathematics. Most children are confident and articulate. They listen well and can follow instructions. They would benefit from more planned opportunities to develop listening and talking skills in groups. At the early stages children are developing their phonic skills well. They enjoy the well planned learning activities to explore letters and words. Across all stages, children read regularly in class from a wide range of texts, including novels, film clips and poetry. At the early stages, children practise their reading daily in pairs. The majority of children can read set texts. A few can skim and scan for information. By P7 children talk with confidence about novels they have read. They are less confident talking about the features of books or the differences between texts. Staff recognise the need for a consistent approach to extending reading opportunities to ensure children develop higher order thinking skills. Children have regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes. Younger children use their core words to build sentences each day. At P3 children produced attractive and clear information leaflets about Dundee city attractions. Older children used emotive writing to convey their feelings about conflict in World War 1. Across the school, children are developing their knowledge and understanding of number. They enjoy daily routines to practice mental agility and this is beginning to have a positive impact on children's confidence and achievement in tackling numeracy challenges. At P3 through 'Calendar' mathematics children showed speed and accuracy in multiplication activities. At the middle stages, children used Dundee bus timetables to support their learning of time and to calculate the durations of planned journeys. By P7 the majority of children are able to calculate percentages and understand financial budgets. They are developing skills in information handling by presenting data gathered on spread sheets. However, there is scope to improve the breadth of numeracy and mathematics learning across the school and ensure children can apply their learning across the curriculum. This includes having a stronger focus on using the local area. In the nursery class and at the primary stages most children understand the steps required to pursue a healthy and active life style. All children and staff participate in the 'daily mile'. Children across the school participate in a range of after-school clubs and sports including netball, football, martial arts, tennis, gymnastics and dance. Children talk with confidence about the benefits of restorative conversations in resolving disagreements and in describing how to keep themselves safe when using social media.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Across the primary stages and in the nursery class, staff work well together to provide a caring and welcoming learning environment. In the nursery, staff plan a range of learning opportunities which support children to follow some of their interests in the play room and outdoors. A few resources and play activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for children or allow them to take risks in a safe environment. Staff should review contexts for learning and the layout of the playroom to ensure they consistently meet children's needs. At the primary stages, in the majority of lessons, teachers plan learning well to meet the needs of individual pupils. In the best examples, tasks and activities provide appropriate challenge for all children, but this is not yet consistent across the school. We have asked staff to review arrangements for grouping children in literacy lessons to better support individual learners. Where children need extra help with their learning, the headteacher and the support for learning teachers organise well-judged tuition and support. Staff respond promptly to children's changing needs and support staff are deployed across classes and outdoors to support the learning and wellbeing of all children. There is scope to widen the role of support for learning staff and consider strategies to ensure that support activities take place in class. In a few classes, support staff were not always used well to support learning. The school has very effective approaches to working in partnership with key agencies to support children. This includes Dundee City Council School and Family Development Worker, and Educational Psychology Services. Parents and staff are very appreciative of the prompt support and guidance provided.

In recent years staff have worked well together to engage children in learning and develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and aspects of health and wellbeing. However overall, progress in developing Curriculum for Excellence has been too slow and we have asked staff to make prompt improvements. There needs to be a clearer focus in the nursery class in responding to children's needs and interests. At the primary stages we recognise that teachers are gaining confidence in using aspects of Curriculum for Excellence in their planning, and have begun to offer children a broader range of curricular activities. Some staff are creative in linking learning across different areas. For example, in the middle stages children used digital technology and film clips effectively to learn about inference, and to improve reading skills. However, the school has not yet developed a clear rationale for the whole curriculum. There is a need to provide children with progression and challenge in their learning across all areas of the curriculum. Staff need to be confident in deciding when skills are best taught as discrete areas. Children's experiences in expressive arts should be improved. There is a need to refresh the contexts for learning across the school to ensure they are relevant to children living in Dundee. At all stages staff should make more effective use of the local community and the wider city context to enhance children's knowledge and experiences. Children would also benefit from learning more about skills for learning, life and work. The school has a range of activities in place to support children moving from nursery to P1. This includes the cluster wide 'Jack and the Beanstalk' transition project, helping children make links in learning when they start school. Children move from P7 to a range of different secondary schools. This presents a challenge for effective transition, and the school takes steps to ensure well planned support for all children.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher is a confident and caring leader who listens well to the views of stakeholders. She is well supported by the acting depute headteacher and staff, and all are committed to improving the work of the school. The staff work well as a team and openly welcome opportunities to learn and improve their skills. This has recently included reflecting on national self-evaluation tools and using assessment data more effectively to track and analyse children's progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff use information gathered to inform school improvement priorities. This is beginning to have an impact on improving children's attainment. The whole school commitment to developing a positive learning culture has had a positive impact on children's learning and their behaviour. The management team observe lessons and give staff helpful feedback on their work. Staff are also involved in peer observation. Too often this focuses only on teaching. To improve children's attainment this activity now needs to focus on the learners' experiences and the quality of the curriculum. Staff increasingly take on leadership roles to improve children's learning experiences, including leading curricular developments. The management team now have a clearer understanding of the strengths and development needs of the school and are confident to move forward. Overall most parents are happy with the work of the school. They support the school well in fundraising and social activities. With the support of Dundee City Council, the headteacher and her staff are well placed to lead the school and raise standards further.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the school had one requirement and two recommendations. From these, one requirement and one recommendation has been met or partially addressed. Outstanding issues relating to children's views being sought are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there is one requirement and five recommendations.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Polite, well-behaved children who are eager to learn and participate in all aspects of school life.
- Committed staff team who are determined to improve children's experiences and attainment.
- Effective engagement with partners to support children facing challenges in their learning and lives.

We discussed with staff and Dundee City Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to improve the curriculum to ensure all children can make suitable progress in all aspects of their learning.
- Continue to develop learning and teaching to ensure a high quality experience for all children at all stages.
- Ensure that approaches to self-evaluation result in improvements for children's learning.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with Dundee City Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.

Susan Duff
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations and national care standards gradings, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/MillOfMainsPrimarySchoolDundeeCity.asp>

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