



**Dunbar Primary School and
Nursery Class
East Lothian Council
25 August 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.

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.

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1. The school

Dunbar Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the town of Dunbar. The roll was 936, including 224 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in June 2009.

Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. Around 15 members of staff, including the headteacher, started in August 2008. The school has provision for wraparound care.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The strong start made by the headteacher in securing improvement.
- High quality learning experiences for children in the nursery classes.
- Good use of the outdoor environment for learning by staff in the nursery and primary classes.
- Partnerships with parents.

3. Example of good practice

- Use of the outdoor environment to enhance children's learning.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery classes benefit from the wide range of interesting experiences offered. All children confidently explore, investigate and enjoy energetic play in the attractive outdoor area on a daily basis. Almost all children in the primary classes are keen to learn. They work well with each other and are becoming confident learners. Children are becoming more directly involved in their learning. They do this both in class and, for example, in the school garden and grounds. Children are beginning to evaluate their own and others' classwork. They are not yet clear enough on how to improve their learning. Children at some stages need support to become more independent in their learning.

Children in the nursery classes achieve well in a wide range of areas. Across the school, children are developing important skills in citizenship and are learning to take responsibility for themselves and others. Children at P5 and P7 report positively on the benefits of very popular residential experiences. Children's achievement is enhanced by taking part in productive enterprise activities and, particularly at the later stages, by involvement in school clubs. Children contribute well to various groups, including the eco group, and are growing in confidence as a result. Junior Road Safety Officers are very proud of the recent presentation they made as part of a visit to the Scottish Parliament. Children are not yet sufficiently skilled in using information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

Children in the nursery class are making very good progress in their development and learning. They listen very well to instructions and talk confidently about what they like to do in the nursery. Children can count well and are very aware of numbers in the playrooms and in the outdoor area. Across the primary classes, most children are making good progress in English language and mathematics. A minority of children are capable of achieving even more. Children's attainment in reading and mathematics has improved over the last few years. Progress in writing has been limited. Most children are achieving national levels of attainment in reading and mathematics, and the majority are achieving them in writing. A minority of children at the early stages are now achieving these levels early. In English language, most children share their ideas openly and answer questions confidently. They are becoming more fully engaged in and enjoy reading for pleasure. Children write for a wide variety of purposes. The quality of children's writing, however, needs further improvement. In mathematics, most children are confident in number work and can do written and mental calculations accurately. Most solve problems well. Their skills in using ICT in their mathematical work are not yet fully developed. Children at a number of stages are developing important skills in investigation through, for example, work in science.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery and primary classes, staff plan a broad and balanced range of learning experiences for children. Staff in the nursery provide a stimulating curriculum which builds well on children's interests and curiosity. Across the primary classes, teachers have placed a strong and effective emphasis on providing interesting programmes linked to *Curriculum for Excellence*. They have started to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills across different areas of the curriculum. Children are now benefiting from approaches to learning that encourage them to be more active. They gain from a range of interesting, valuable and well-planned educational outings. Most teachers share with children what they expect them to learn and evaluate with them what they have learned. These approaches now need to be used more consistently across the school to help ensure further improvement in children's learning and attainment. Staff in the primary classes need to make better use of the wide range of information from the nursery in order to build on children's prior learning. Children do not yet experience two hours of good quality physical education each week.

In the nursery, staff know children as individuals and respond well to their learning needs. The wraparound service offers flexible care facilities for children and families and enhances the overall support for children in the nursery classes. Across the primary stages, staff work well together to provide a supportive and caring learning environment. Teachers have recently reviewed and improved the way they assess children's work and track their progress. This has helped them to match tasks and resources more closely to children's learning needs. This requires continued development. Some activities do not yet challenge higher-achieving children enough. A range of support for learning staff provides good assistance to children with additional learning needs. Most of these children are making good progress towards meeting their learning targets. The school recognises the need to continue to work flexibly to meet the learning needs of all children. Teachers use homework activities to support children's

learning in class. Further work is required to ensure that this is consistent and effective across all stages.

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

Staff work well with parents and a range of organisations and agencies to support children's learning. They keep parents well informed through helpful progress reports and a range of interesting newsletters. The Parent Council is active and very supportive. The school consults parents on important aspects of school life, including sensitive health issues. There are appropriate arrangements in place to deal with complaints or concerns from children and parents. Staff, ably supported by the principal teacher inclusion, have developed good and improving links with a number of external agencies. Children benefit from regular support from a local church youth worker and the active schools' coordinator. The school has well-established and highly effective arrangements in place to help children move confidently and successfully from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Dunbar Grammar School.

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

Children are increasingly involved in making decisions about the school. They have helped develop the school's revised aims. The pupil council is actively involved in the development of the school through organising social and fund-raising events. Children also take responsibilities for organising safe routes to school, being buddies to younger children and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Children have been consulted on their views about aspects of health, including possible health-week activities. They feel the school takes their opinions into account in planning for future events through the use of surveys and classroom discussions. Staff now have a stronger role in taking forward improvements in the school. They contribute positively to school working groups which are leading to the development of important aspects of the curriculum. As a result of this work, for

example, improvements are being made to both the curriculum and to aspects of children's experiences. Staff are confident that their contribution will lead to further improvements to the life and work of the school. The headteacher and senior management team have worked hard to include staff in developing and improving the curriculum and learning and teaching. This good work now needs to be developed further.

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

The school has a friendly and positive climate in which children are cared for well. Staff have targeted and addressed some previous concerns about the behaviour of a minority of children. They now have clear expectations of children's behaviour. Almost all children are well behaved. Children feel that staff deal with bullying well. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated at popular assemblies and through use of displays. Assemblies are used appropriately for sharing the values of the school and for religious observance. Staff now need to continue to raise expectations of children's learning and attainment. Staff know their responsibilities in protecting children and implementing necessary procedures. The school encourages children to eat healthily and take part in physical exercise. Significant numbers of children cycle to and from school on a regular basis. Staff monitor children's attendance closely. Children in the nursery have good opportunities to experience different celebrations and other cultures. In the primary classes, children's awareness of a range of cultures needs to be developed further.

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

In her short time in post, the headteacher has helped establish a clear and shared vision for the future direction of the school. In consultation with the school community, she has taken immediate and very helpful steps to bring about improvement for children, staff and parents. The school community is positive about the changes that have taken place since the headteacher took up post. The depute headteachers and principal teachers support the headteacher well. They have helped

ensure improvements in a number of areas, including in active learning and tracking children's progress. Staff are taking on responsibilities for developing the work of the school in a number of important areas. Working closely with the school community, the headteacher now needs to ensure that the many positive developments identified result in improvements to attainment. The school, with the support of the education authority, is building a solid base from which it is well placed to ensure further improvements for children.

9. 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. However, given the degree of staff change in this large school, the District Inspector will ask for a report on progress on attainment within one year of publication of this report. 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.

- Improve children's attainment in writing.
- Further develop consistency in aspects of learning and teaching.
- Continue to take steps to help children know what to do to improve their learning.
- Improve children's experiences and skills in information and communications technology.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation, which was being addressed.

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 Dunbar Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	very 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: Peter McNaughton
25 August 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