



**Murthly Primary School
and Nursery Class
Perth and Kinross Council
7 June 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 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

Murthly Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Murthly and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 76, including 16 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in April 2011. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2009/2010.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children who are confident and happy.
- The caring and supportive ethos.
- Children's skills in singing and performing.
- Children's experiences in the nursery class.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, children are confident and happy. Almost all children are motivated and enthusiastic about learning, especially when they are actively involved in lessons. In the nursery class, children are good at making choices about their learning. They can share and take turns. Children take responsibility for a few activities, including helping to prepare snacks. Across the primary classes, children are good at working together in pairs and small groups. They benefit from helpful feedback from teachers in a few areas of their work. Children are not yet clear enough about their strengths, progress and next steps in learning. Across the school, children's use of information and communications technology (ICT) needs to be extended further. Overall, most children feel safe, included and respected at school.

Children in the nursery class are developing a good awareness of how to look after the environment. They can express themselves well through singing and drawing. In the primary classes, children develop valuable personal and social skills. They achieve well in a range of sporting activities. Children demonstrate responsible citizenship skills and take on leadership roles effectively. They develop effective skills

in singing and performing through school shows and assemblies. Children's skills in science and investigation need to be improved. In social studies, children at P3/4 are developing good map reading skills as they learn about their local area. The school needs to ensure that all children have well-planned opportunities to learn through a wide range of personal achievements.

In the nursery class, most children are making good progress in early language and mathematics. Most children listen well to adults and respond appropriately to instructions. Most children can recognise letter shapes and a few older children can write their own name. Almost all children can count to ten. They can recognise two-dimensional shapes during play activities. Children's skills in weighing and estimating are progressing well through baking and other activities. Across the primary classes, most children are making satisfactory progress in English language and mathematics. Most children talk and listen well in small groups. They can read with appropriate understanding and expression. Children in the middle and upper stages need to develop a wider range of reading skills. Most children can write at length. They do not always apply their knowledge of spelling and grammar well enough. In mathematics, children's skills in a few aspects of mental calculation, such as addition and multiplication, are developing well. Overall, they need to improve the speed and accuracy of mental calculations. Written calculations are not presented well enough. Children are aware of problem solving strategies and have started to use these across their learning within a few lessons.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, the curriculum is based on play and enjoyment. Children's learning is well planned. Staff take account of children's interests when planning activities. Staff should continue to seek outdoor learning opportunities for children. Across the primary classes, the curriculum provides children with a range of learning experiences. Staff confidence in using Curriculum for Excellence to plan children's learning is beginning to increase. The structure of the

curriculum varies from class to class and a few activities lack a clear purpose. The curriculum is enhanced by trips, visitors to school and the high quality outdoor play areas. Children are beginning to be given choices about aspects of their learning. They benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education per week. Children's skills in literacy and numeracy are not developed well enough across the curriculum. Staff need to ensure that all children have a well-planned range of opportunities to learn through personal achievements.

Staff know children very well and provide a high level of pastoral care and support. In the nursery class, children's needs are well met. Staff know children well as individuals and plan their learning accordingly. Staff do not always interact with children well enough to extend their learning through play. Across the primary classes, tasks and activities are well matched to children's needs in the majority of lessons. A few activities are too routine in nature and do not always provide enough challenge for all children. The pace of learning is too slow at times. Staff are not yet focusing closely enough on the progress made by each child across all areas of their learning. The school is improving ways of identifying and supporting children who need extra help with their learning. As a result, children who need extra help are beginning to make better progress in their learning. Classroom assistants provide high-quality support. Support for learning approaches are too focused on completing resources. They need to be based more clearly on what children need to learn. Homework activities are not always regular enough or of a consistently high quality.

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

Staff are making significant improvements to the ways in which they work with others to support children's learning. Children who need extra help with their learning benefit from the input of other professionals, including speech therapists and an educational psychologist. Teachers provide parents with very clear and helpful overviews of children's learning each term. This includes good ideas

for extending learning at home. The headteacher has helped to raise parents' awareness of Curriculum for Excellence through workshops. Parents are consulted over sensitive aspects of health education. The Parent Council is highly supportive of the school. They have helped to raise funds to support school improvements. Working with staff, parents have started to plan for the creation of a new outdoor classroom. Across the school, staff need to increase opportunities for parents to support and improve children's progress in learning. Staff should extend further the involvement of the local community in supporting children's learning. Children are supported well when they move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1 at Perth Grammar School. The school needs to improve approaches to recording complaints received and any action taken as a result.

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

Children and staff contribute well to the life of the school through special events and school shows. The eco committee has led improvements to the school's environment resulting in a silver award from Eco-Schools Scotland. Prefects provide valuable support for younger children. The headteacher has identified the need for the pupil council to be more actively involved in improving learning. Staff are keen to improve their school community. They work well with the principal teacher to improve provision for children who need extra help with their learning. Overall, staff have not yet been sufficiently involved in developing the curriculum or leading improvements. The headteacher observes classroom practice and monitors the life and work of the school. This results in positive, supportive feedback to staff. Overall, self-evaluation does not always have enough impact on improving learning, achievement and the pace of children's progress.

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

There is a caring and highly supportive ethos in the school. Relationships are very positive and this helps staff and children to feel valued and respected. Almost all children are well behaved. Achievements are shared through assemblies, which also provide effective opportunities for religious observance. The school has an appropriate policy for keeping children safe. A few staff would benefit from further training on child protection and safeguarding. The school deals with any allegations of bullying appropriately, although some parents and children are not clear about the school's anti-bullying policy. Aspects of equality and diversity are promoted through the curriculum. Staff need to increase their expectations of the quality of children's written work. They do not yet have a shared understanding of the standards within Curriculum for Excellence levels. As a result, staff expectations of children's progress in learning are not high enough.

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

The headteacher is committed to the school community. He has formed positive relationships and is highly supportive of staff and children. As a result, staff and children feel confident and included within the school. The principal teacher has made a significant impact on improving the school's provision for children who need extra help with their learning. She now needs to be involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Local authority officers have made a significant impact on improving the school through a review and a range of follow-up activities. The headteacher now needs to give staff clearer and more focused direction. Staff need greater involvement in self-evaluation and school improvement. A clear plan for implementing Curriculum for Excellence needs to be developed. With increased involvement of all staff, and the support of the local authority, the school has the capacity 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.

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

- Improve leadership for learning.
- Increase further the pace of children's progress in learning.
- Improve the curriculum, based on a shared understanding of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Increase the involvement of staff in improving the school through self-evaluation.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements or recommendations

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 Murthly Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

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	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Graeme Logan
7 June 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 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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