



**Hardgate Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway
Council
1 March 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

Hardgate Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the villages of Hardgate, Haugh of Urr, Milton and the surrounding area. The roll was 67 when the inspection was carried out in January 2011. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, well behaved children with an enthusiasm for learning.
- The headteacher's vision and drive towards school improvement.
- Staff who provide a welcoming, supportive and caring ethos.
- Parents' support for the life and work of the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the primary stages, almost all children are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. They work very well independently, in pairs and together in small groups. Children are good at supporting each other's learning and know what they need to do to improve. 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 at P5, P6 and P7 have extended their literacy skills by writing a report describing a recent science experiment.

Almost all children achieve well across their learning activities. This includes taking part in musical activities such as the choir and participating in school musical presentations. Children develop leadership skills through their involvement as play group buddies, information and communications technology (ICT) mentors and through roles such as house captains. The headteacher encourages achievement for all, and children record their successes on the school's 'tree of achievement'. Children develop their physical abilities by taking part in various out-of-school activities such as football, netball, hockey and country dancing.

Overall, attainment in reading and mathematics is very good and has improved in recent years, but attainment in writing has headroom for improvement. Almost all children achieve appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics and most achieve national levels in writing. A few children are capable of achieving national levels of attainment in writing earlier than they presently do. In English language, almost all children listen well and talk confidently in groups. Children read well with understanding and are encouraged to read for enjoyment. In writing, most children write well for a range of purposes, however children should have more opportunities to build on their prior learning. In mathematics, children enjoy learning when aspects of mathematics are set in a real life context. They are encouraged to share their thinking about mathematics. Almost all children in the early years are secure when counting and using even and odd numbers. Almost all children display a good knowledge of the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Across the school, ICT is used to develop mathematics. This approach should be developed further. In French, children in P6 and P7 speak with confidence, developing basic conversation skills. Children improve their fitness in fast-paced physical education lessons, which use a variety of exciting activities. In religious education, children have a very good understanding of Christianity and are continuing to develop their knowledge of other world religions.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Across the school, children have a very broad and balanced curriculum, including developing children's skills in enterprise, citizenship and skills for work. Staff have made a very 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 healthy snack options, and physical activity outdoors. An active schools coordinator and specialist teachers for physical education (PE), music and art help to enhance children's experiences. The curriculum is widened through learning activities in the outdoor playground and the recently added outdoor classroom. The school

uses a range of ICT to enhance children's learning in various areas of the curriculum. This includes good use of Glow, Scotland's national schools' intranet.

In almost all lessons teachers plan appropriate tasks and activities to match children's needs. Children are keen and enthusiastic when discussing their learning experiences in the school and spoke very positively about how they are supported by staff. In a few lessons, activities are not always matched to the learning needs of all children. There needs to be a clearer use of assessment to inform the teaching of writing. Staff complete a range of observations of children's learning. They do not always use this information well enough to plan children's next steps in learning and ensure they make appropriate progress. The additional support for learning teacher works 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 are very effective in the classroom supporting children's learning. Most staff share the purpose of their lessons and review learning with children. This could be more consistent. Regular homework is set and this is being developed further through the new home learning programme.

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

Staff work very well in partnership with outside agencies, local businesses and parents. The Parent Council supports the school well. They raise considerable funds and participate in various social events for children. The headteacher informs parents about the work of the school through a regular newsletter and the school website. Parents are very complimentary about the work of the school. They feel the headteacher takes account of their views. Staff provide parents with informative written reports termly on their children's progress. The headteacher informs parents about sensitive aspects of health education. The school is very good at sorting out any concerns or complaints. Well-planned arrangements are in place for children

moving from the playgroup to P1. The school works well with staff from Castle Douglas High School to support children, including those who need additional support, 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. Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. Staff are extremely helpful and provide a nurturing atmosphere. They are very reflective about their work and this helps to strengthen learning and teaching. The headteacher visits classes, samples children's work and analyses attainment. The detailed school improvement plan has improved children's learning experiences, notably in mathematics. Children identify strongly with their school. They are encouraged and supported to take responsibility across the school through their involvement in the pupil council, junior road safety group and by leadership within the school's house system. Older children help younger children in the playground and in the classroom. The headteacher and staff lead improvements across the school. All teaching staff should take further responsibility for school improvement as leaders for learning.

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

The school is welcoming and has a very positive ethos. This is set out in the school vision statements. All staff have very high expectations for children's welfare, behaviour and attendance. The school is a very caring and inclusive environment. 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. Children feel safe and valued in the school. All staff make keeping children safe a high priority. Children's achievements both in and out-of-school are celebrated in assemblies and displayed around the school to enhance the learning environment. Staff promote and celebrate equality and diversity through assemblies and from work

in religious and moral education. There are regular opportunities for religious observance. The school chaplain makes valuable contributions weekly to the work of the school and contributes to school assemblies.

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

The headteacher is a very effective leader and provides the school with a clear sense of direction. She has a very clear vision to ensure children are provided with the highest quality learning experiences. All staff are highly committed to doing their best for every child. The staff are developing the curriculum very well by using *Curriculum for Excellence*. Parents and children contribute well to the school's vision and aims. They play a leading part in improvements. The headteacher is very highly regarded by children, staff and parents. As a result, the school is well placed to improve further.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. 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 attainment in writing.
- Ensure that tasks and activities provide sufficient challenge for all learners.

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 Hardgate Primary School.

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

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

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Aileen Monaghan

1 March 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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