



**St Mary's Primary School
and Nursery Class
Paisley
Renfrewshire Council
23 June 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

St Mary's Primary School is a denominational school with a nursery class and a pre-school assessment and development unit (PSADU). It serves an area of the west end of Paisley. The roll was 256, including 35 in the nursery and 18 in the PSADU when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. Children's attendance was below the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, respectful children who are eager to learn.
- Learning experiences provided for children in the PSADU.
- Relationships between staff and children supported by the senior management team.
- Parents' strong support for the school.
- Leadership of the headteacher in improving the school.

3. Examples of good practice

- Work with support services.
- Work with parents.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery are happy and forming friendships with one another. They are learning to cooperate but a few children need more support to try different experiences. Staff are beginning to build on the good practice of taking account of children's interests when planning activities. Children have regular opportunities for outdoor play. A few children need more encouragement to become independent. Overall, they are making good progress. Almost all children are making

attempts at writing their name. They are developing confidence in talking to one another and adults and they can listen and follow simple instructions. The majority can count to ten and some are beginning to recognise number symbols.

Children in the PSADU enjoy their learning and are growing in confidence. Almost all settle quickly to activities, take turns in games and like their social use of language programme. Children are able to make choices and respond very well to stimulating learning activities skilfully supported by staff. For example, looking after sick jungle animals in the vet's surgery. Children sing enthusiastically. Children are making good progress in their use of language. Children are able to follow simple pictorial signs and oral instructions from staff. Most can recognise numbers to ten and can name them.

In the primary classes, children are enthusiastic about learning. They are polite and respectful of each other. Younger children are regularly involved in meaningful play activities. Across the school, children are developing their skills in teamwork, citizenship and leadership by taking on responsibility for organising events, such as the 'Oscars' ceremony. Children show their talents in music and recitation by performing Scottish songs and poems at school concerts.

At the primary stages, most children are making good progress in English language and the majority do so in mathematics. Most consistently attain appropriate national levels in reading and a significant majority do so in writing. Most attain these levels in mathematics but standards have varied in recent years. Across the school, a few children do achieve expected levels of attainment early. In English language, children are able to share ideas and opinions well in class and group discussions. They are attentive and develop their skills in listening and talking in other areas of the curriculum. Children read well and for a wide range of purposes. Across the school, children are not yet writing regularly enough and many are capable of achieving more. In mathematics, most children can do mental and written calculations well.

By P7, the majority of children are able to name and apply problem solving strategies.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery, PSADU and primary classes, staff organise a broad and balanced curriculum. Activities are developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. From the nursery class onwards, staff provide a well-planned health education programme. In primary classes, staff make increasing use of visits to extend learning. Community projects are successfully developing children's skills in enterprise and creativity. Staff are putting in place aspects of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*, particularly at the early stages.

Across the school, staff meet children's needs well overall. Nursery and primary staff know their children and now need to make better use of information gathered about children's progress to plan children's next steps in learning. Children who attend the PSADU receive skilled support and most make good progress. Those with more complex needs would benefit from access to specialist sensory materials and equipment. Children have detailed individualised education plans which have clear, regularly reviewed targets. In the primary classes, class teachers mainly set work, including homework, at an appropriate level in reading and mathematics. Appropriate learning plans are in place for children who require them. Children with English as an additional language are making good progress.

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

The school community works very well with support services. Staff welcome parents and provide them with informative reports on their progress. The Parent Partnership is taking the lead in improving school grounds and is very supportive. Parents are highly satisfied with their increasing involvement with the school. The school provides helpful language classes to parents who have English as an additional

language. The school deals promptly and effectively with any concerns raised and parents are consulted on sensitive aspects of health education. The school works well with Reid Kerr College and schools in the area. Children benefit from well-planned support for their move from home to nursery and into P1 and from P7 to St Andrew's Academy.

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

Children contribute to improving their school through their involvement in the eco and health committees and the pupil council. With support from staff, they are working towards achieving a green flag from Eco-Schools Scotland. They have achieved an excellence award for health promotion. Staff are committed to improving their school. Most take on additional responsibilities through their contribution to working parties and after-school clubs. Teachers are becoming more reflective about their work. They have started to observe teaching in other classes to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Senior staff discuss teachers' plans and observe lessons. They are aware they need to continue to improve the quality of written feedback to teachers. Senior staff are becoming more effective at using assessment information to improve children's attainment and achievement. The school improvement plan has had a positive impact on many aspects of the work of the school.

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

In St Mary's Primary School, relationships between staff and children are very positive. All staff are strongly committed to the well-being of children and have a good understanding of child protection procedures. Children's achievements are celebrated at school assemblies and shared with families in the school newsletter and school website. Staff have high expectations about behaviour and attendance but not yet of attainment. Children are very well behaved.

There are appropriate opportunities for religious observance and developing children's understanding of other beliefs and cultures. Staff treat children fairly and with respect.

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

The headteacher is highly regarded by children, parents and staff. She has led the way in improving key aspects of the school for example, the curriculum, children's learning experiences and partnerships with parents. Both the new depute headteacher and new principal teacher are making a very effective and innovative contribution to the work of the school. Encouraged by the headteacher, staff are open to new ways of working and moving forward. The school is now well placed to bring about further improvement in children's learning.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in the 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.

- Continue to raise attainment in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure tasks and the pace of learning enable children to progress in line with their potential.
- Continue to improve arrangements for self-evaluation to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for children.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class no requirements and no recommendations were made.

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 St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	good
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	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: Marion Burns
23 June 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