



**Barr Primary School and
Nursery Class
South Ayrshire Council
5 May 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.

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Example of good practice
4. How well do children learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

1. The school

Barr Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Barr and the surrounding area. The roll was 30, including five in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in February 2009. Pupils' attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Confident, articulate children who are very keen to learn.
- Attainment in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Staff teamwork and their commitment to the care and wellbeing of all children.
- The involvement of children in outdoor learning activities and wider community projects.
- Support of parents and the local community.
- The very positive impact of the leadership of the headteacher and staff on school improvement.

3. Example of good practice

- Outdoor learning.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery class are happy and settled in their routines. They enjoy the very good range of activities available. They are confident in choosing toys and making decisions in their play. All children play well together, share toys and consider others' feelings. Children speak confidently to adults and some are beginning to share

ideas with others during play. Staff are very caring and provide very good support to help children become more successful in their learning. They are making very good progress in all areas of their development and learning. They enjoy listening to stories and respond well to instructions from an adult. All children can recognise their name in print and confidently make marks and attempts at early writing. Children are keen to count, sort and match objects. They are learning to recognise numbers. All children express their ideas well when painting, using craft materials, playing imaginatively and making music. Nursery children are learning about the natural world through planting and growing seeds in their garden tubs. They are keen to feed the birds each day and have been finding out about the different types that visit the school garden. Staff make observations of children's progress in all areas of their learning. They could now further develop children's individual folders to include these successes and achievements.

At the primary stages, children are very well motivated in their learning, both within the classroom and outwith school. Children work well with the local community to broaden their enterprise and citizenship skills. For example, they have organised a garden party to celebrate their new school garden. They participate in the village concerts and give community service by assisting in the local tearoom. The local newspaper regularly celebrates children's achievements and successes. All children in the school participate in a range of outdoor education activities which help them learn to co-operate, work together, solve problems and become confident in the outdoor environment. Enterprise and citizenship are important parts of school life and staff create a wide range of opportunities to involve children in these areas. Children can link and apply the skills learned to other situations. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy a wide range of physical games and activities. The percussion instructor adds outstanding value to all children's experiences. All children were very motivated and enthusiastic when working together to create, make and perform their musical samba. Overall, children achieve very well across a wide range of experiences. They are making very good progress in English language and mathematics.

Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently high. Children listen very well and are able to express their ideas and opinions clearly in discussion. They have a range of opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills through group work, assemblies, performances and engagement with the wider community. Children read with confidence and fluency. At P6 and P7, they have a good understanding of aspects of characterisation, plot and setting in stories. They are ready to be more independent in their reading activities. Children talk enthusiastically about books they have read. Children write well for a variety of purposes but need more opportunities to write at length. In mathematics, progress is very good. All children are attaining or exceeding national standards in mathematics. Children are secure in their achievements and are making very good progress from previous levels. At P7, children can work confidently with numbers, including decimals, fractions and percentages. They are able to handle information well, describe accurately the properties of different shapes and calculate volume. At P4, children are making good use of technology to reinforce their work on co-ordinates. Children at all stages are able to discuss and use problem solving strategies. Children would benefit from more interactive mental mathematics activities.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff in the nursery provide children with a good range of experiences. They plan a well-balanced curriculum which is based on play, active learning and children's enjoyment. Early literacy and numeracy are very much embedded in all aspects of children's play. Very good use is made of the local community to support children's learning. Children have good opportunities to engage in a variety of energetic physical play activities. Staff now need to provide children with increased opportunities to explore and experiment with a range of materials. In the primary classes, staff provide children with an appropriately broad curriculum. They are starting to develop aspects of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*, in science. Staff encourage children to make good use of personal, social and citizenship skills. They work well with people in the local community to develop

enterprise activities. The school curriculum promotes wider achievements well and children are becoming confident individuals and responsible citizens through these activities. Staff now need to ensure that the curriculum is not too narrowly based on commercially produced resources.

In the nursery class, meeting children's learning needs is very good. Staff know children very well and are sensitive to their individual circumstances. They are very focused on enabling children to be confident and successful in their learning. They support children's emotional, personal and social needs very well and are very aware of each individual's strengths and next steps in learning. Across the school, support for children with identified additional learning needs is very well managed and effective. Clear and detailed plans are in place and are regularly reviewed. Teachers almost always set tasks and activities at the right level for children. Staff engage children very successfully in their learning activities. They share the purposes of lessons with children and check what has been learned. Children are confident and very keen to learn. They are very well behaved and carry out tasks well. They should be given more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

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

Parents of nursery children are closely involved in the work of the nursery class. They are regularly consulted and plans are shared on a daily basis. There are very good arrangements in place to support children when starting the nursery and when moving on to P1. A range of external support agencies work very well with the school. This includes joint support teams and visiting staff. All staff work effectively together to support children in their learning. They are highly sensitive to the needs of children and work well with them. The school keeps parents well informed through newsletters, open days, parents' meetings and regular reports on children's progress. Parents, including an active Parent Council, are very supportive of the school.

There are very strong learning partnerships with the local community. Effective transition arrangements are in place with Girvan Academy. The school handles any complaints in a conscientious manner.

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

Children benefit from a strong working relationship between school and nursery staff. At the primary stages, children are very confident about helping in the school and in the wider community. There are a good range of opportunities for them to take responsibility and develop leadership roles. Children have been involved in arranging a number of community activities and work positively with others in the village. They take part in the John Muir award, join in the village litter pick up, perform in Burns' competitions and are working towards an Eco-Schools Scotland green flag award. Children are developing a range of personal, social and citizenship skills through these projects. Staff regularly discuss their practice with a view to improving children's learning experiences. They are keen to take responsibility for curricular developments and to improve their teaching. Staff have a very strong commitment to supporting children in community events.

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

The school and the nursery are very welcoming. Children are happy and settled. Children and staff relate very well to one another. Children are very polite and courteous and treat each other with respect. Staff have high expectations of children's attendance, achievement and behaviour. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated at regular assemblies. The school chaplain contributes to both religious observance and support in classes. All staff are aware of the school's safeguarding arrangements and apply them conscientiously. Children feel that their opinions are listened to and valued. They feel that all are treated equally and fairly. At the senior stages, children are very confident in their learning.

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

The headteacher provides effective leadership. She has a very clear and focused sense of direction and has shared this with staff. She has taken very positive steps to improve wider achievements, outdoor learning and the overall quality of children's learning experiences. Staff and children respond well to her leadership. Morale is high and staff work very well as a team. They are highly committed to help the school to continue to improve. Staff use an effective range of approaches to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Teachers are given very useful feedback on their planning and teaching. They regularly reflect on their own practice. The headteacher, working with teachers, monitors children's progress very closely. Children could now be more actively involved in contributing to the school improvement process. Overall, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits following 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.

- Continue to develop aspects of reading and writing to further improve children's learning experiences.
- Continue to review the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements, and no 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 Barr Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Isabel Robb

5 May 2009

To find out more about inspections or get an electronic copy of this report go to www.hmie.gov.uk. Please contact the Business Management and Communications Team (BMCT) if you wish to enquire about our arrangements for translated or other appropriate versions.

If you wish to comment about any of our inspections, contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or alternatively you should write in the first instance to BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsso.org.uk.

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