

**Report To:** Education & Lifelong Learning Committee

**Date:** 06 September 2011

**Report By:** Corporate Director Education & Communities

**Report No:** EDUC/28/11/AH

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**Subject:** HMle report on St Mary's Primary School

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee of a HMle external evaluation of St Mary's Primary School.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 St Mary's Primary School has received a good report from the HMle. Members should note that in the indicators of quality three aspects of the school were judged to be 'good', one aspect as 'satisfactory and one aspect as 'weak'. The report was produced on 28 June 2011.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee approve the report on St Mary's Primary School.

**Albert Henderson**  
Corporate Director Education & Communities

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 St Mary's Primary School was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) in May 2011. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages, identified key strengths and main points for action using the following six-point scale:

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 6 | - | Excellent – outstanding, sector leading                    |
| 5 | - | Very Good – major strengths                                |
| 4 | - | Good – important strengths with some areas for improvement |
| 3 | - | Satisfactory – strengths just outweigh weaknesses          |
| 2 | - | Weak – important weaknesses                                |
| 1 | - | Unsatisfactory – major weaknesses                          |

4.2 HMIe assessed and reported on the views of parents, pupils and staff, the quality of learning in teaching, how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, achievement in national examinations, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, the school's capacity for improvement.

4.3 The report was published on the 28 June 2011 and is attached. It has been issued to staff, parents, local elected members and the Convener and Vice-Convener for Education & Lifelong Learning.

4.4 St Mary's Primary School is inspected under the evaluation framework "How Good Is Our School 3?"

4.5 In assessing the indicators of quality, HMIe found three aspects of the work of the school to be 'good', one to be 'satisfactory' and one to be 'weak'. The evaluations of the indicators for quality can be found on page 8 of the report.

4.6 The report lists four particular strengths of the school:

- Confident, enthusiastic children who create a positive atmosphere throughout the school
- Partnerships to support and enrich children's learning and promote their Roman Catholic faith
- Work of the acting deputy headteacher in improving how the school meets children's needs
- Work of all staff in maintaining positive outcomes for children through the ethos and cultural life of the school during a period of considerable change

4.7 The reports lists four areas for improvement:

- Establish a new, ambitious vision for the school to ensure improvements in learning for all children
- Develop a whole-school approach to taking account of Curriculum for Excellence
- Through a new culture of self-evaluation, promote leadership for learning across the school
- Ensure all staff contribute to their own professional development through access to professional review approaches

4.8 A detailed Action Plan has been produced by the Headteacher which outlines how the areas for improvement will be addressed. The implementation of this Action Plan will be closely monitored by the Head of Education and members from the Quality Improvement Team.



**St Mary's Primary School  
Greenock  
Inverclyde Council  
28 June 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, children and the local community know whether their school<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The school**

St Mary's Primary School is a denominational school. It serves the west central area of Greenock. The roll was 252 when the inspection was carried out in May 2011. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2009/2010. At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for three weeks. The substantive depute headteacher had been absent for a period of months and the principal teacher, who was relatively new to the school, was undertaking the role of acting depute headteacher.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- Confident, enthusiastic children who create a positive atmosphere throughout the school.
- Partnerships to support and enrich children's learning and promote their Roman Catholic faith.
- Work of the acting depute headteacher in improving how the school meets children's needs.
- Work of all staff in maintaining positive outcomes for children through the ethos and cultural life of the school during a period of considerable change.

## **3. How well do children learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

Most children are motivated and enjoy their learning. They show that they are proud of their school by behaving well and creating a positive atmosphere around the school. Overall, children are clear about what they are learning because staff explain the purposes of lessons well. Children are learning how to assess their own work and are beginning to assess the work of others. This will help them to have a better understanding of their strengths and where they can improve in their learning. Children are good at working in groups and teams. They appreciate when teachers ask them for their views. For example, children at P7 used their own questions about the weather to plan interesting topic work.

Children achieve well in many aspects of school life. They participate in a wide range of cultural and sporting events which are important within the life of the Inverclyde community. For example, children have experienced success through singing, reciting and by growing

plants. Those at P5 are preparing a musical celebration for the arrival of the Tall Ships. All children belong to a group and are beginning to contribute in a meaningful way toward the values of the school. For example, the eco group and P4 have mobilised the school to recycle and are ready to make their silver award submission. Children are learning about their Roman Catholic faith through taking responsibility for leading mass. They reflect citizenship skills by caring for younger children in the playground and by raising money for charity.

Children are making good progress in literacy and numeracy skills and most achieve expected national standards. They listen and contribute thoughtfully at all stages using well-developed vocabulary. Almost all children enjoy reading and can discuss favourite authors. They are gaining important reading strategies as they move through the school. Standards of writing are improving this session. Most children write well for a range of purposes. For example, children at P3 wrote amusing 'crazy' poems. They are beginning to benefit from a more structured approach to writing from teachers, which helps them to understand where they can improve. Across the school, most children carry out numerical written and mental calculations with increasing confidence. They would benefit from a more consistent approach from teachers to help them do this more successfully. Children enjoy learning and practising skills through real-life contexts. For example, P4 used measure accurately to make cakes and P5 solved money and measure problems when designing the school garden.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

The lack of consistent strategic leadership over time has impacted negatively on how the school is taking account of Curriculum for Excellence. As a result, staff do not yet share a vision for the school's curriculum. Previous work by staff has led to positive outcomes for children. Teachers continue to plan stimulating activities to reflect topical and cultural events. For example, children at P6/7 have been inspired through building working racing cars. The school now needs to focus clearly on how it will use the experiences and outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence. This will help staff to design a curriculum

which takes account of and builds on children's prior learning and experiences at each stage. Opportunities within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are being developed across the curriculum in classrooms. This now needs to become a strategic and consistent approach across the school. Children benefit from two hours of physical activity each week through physical education programmes and a new outdoor running initiative.

Staff know children well as individuals and almost all create a nurturing environment for learning. Through the variety of teaching approaches and questioning skills which teachers use well, lessons and activities meet the learning needs of most children. There is now scope to increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge particularly for higher achieving children. Approaches to supporting children who need extra help in their learning have improved as a result of strong leadership from the acting depute headteacher. Teachers now make good use of whole-school intervention strategies. As a result, appropriate individualised plans are in place for children who need them. There is scope to make more effective use of support assistants in classrooms by ensuring they are clear about their role. Across the school, homework tasks are varied and children enjoy the opportunities to undertake research tasks at home.

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

The school enjoys a wide range of partnerships which benefit children's learning. Representatives from James Watt College and local engineers support children and teachers in scientific and technological investigation. Sports coaches, working alongside teachers, extend children's physical skills through encouraging them to try a wider range of sports and clubs. The headteacher has begun to build relationships with the supportive Parent Council. She is already receptive to parental concerns and enquiries. Overall, parents are happy with the school. They would like more information about Curriculum for Excellence, timely communications and clearer



information about their child's progress. They are not yet consulted about aspects of sensitive health. External agencies and community partners work closely with individuals and groups to build children's confidence and self esteem as well as enhance learning. They support children very well at key points of transition. The school has well-planned arrangements in place to support transitions from nursery into school and on into secondary school. Productive relationships with Kelly Street Nursery and Notre Dame High school are very well established.

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

Children across the school are at the early stages of making a significant contribution to school improvement. They are clear about the roles they all have as a member of a group across the school. Children are working well as a team to secure another eco award. Approaches to self-evaluation across the school are not well developed. Overall, staff are reflective, enthusiastic and very willing to make improvements to, for example, approaches to planning for numeracy. Interrupted leadership has impacted negatively on teachers' ability to take forward, for example, curricular initiatives through working parties. Staff have not yet introduced a supportive forum for sharing effective practice in learning and teaching. As a result, leadership for learning across the school is not well developed. Arrangements to monitor and track children's progress are not systematic enough to ensure all children are challenged consistently across their learning.

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

The school has a warm, positive ethos. Children are happy as they move around the school. They are proud to share their learning with visitors. Staff have high expectations of children. These expectations now need to become more ambitious. Staff across the school promote

positive health and wellbeing. They understand their responsibilities in the protection of children. Children's successes are celebrated in class and during assemblies as well as through the local press. Children celebrate and learn about their Roman Catholic faith through the close working relationship with the parish priest. The Monsignor and staff guide children well through their sacraments and in learning about equalities through global citizenship.

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

The headteacher has very recently taken up post. She is fully aware of the context of the school. The interruptions to leadership over a period of time and the changes to the staff team have impacted negatively on the work of the school and on staff morale. The headteacher recognises the importance of establishing a new clear, shared vision for the school. This should be agreed by children, staff, parents and partner groups. The acting depute headteacher during her short time in post has worked very well with staff to build positive relationships and improve the approaches to meeting children's learning needs. Staff across the school will benefit from strong, consistent leadership and access to regular professional reviews. This will support them in recognising and building on the examples of effective practice which has enabled them to maintain positive outcomes for children during a period of considerable change.

## **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. Our district inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in the curriculum and self-evaluation.

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

- Establish a new, ambitious vision for the school to ensure improvements in learning for all children.
- Develop a whole-school approach to taking account of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Through a new culture of self-evaluation, promote leadership for learning across the school.
- Ensure all staff contribute to their own professional development through access to professional review approaches.

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.

Primary school

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>good</b>

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

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>weak</b>

**HM Inspector:** Shona E S Taylor  
28 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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