



**Redmyre Primary School
Laurencekirk
Aberdeenshire Council
16 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

Redmyre Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the village of Fordoun near Laurencekirk, and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 48 when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. The headteacher had taken up post in August 2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The enthusiastic attitude to learning of most children.
- Positive relationships amongst staff and most children, and with parents.
- The very effective start made by the new headteacher to improving the school, and the commitment of staff to this work.

3. Example of good practice

- The P7 computer animation project.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all children enjoy being in the school. Most are enthusiastic about their learning experiences. They are keen to talk about what they have learned, and to find out more. Children often experience activities and homework tasks which encourage them to carry out research and follow personal interests. They respond well to tasks like the animation project and the Daffodil Tea enterprise activity which really challenge them. Children in P1 to P3 are actively involved in their own learning, particularly in language activities. Teachers are making more use of the local area to stimulate children's thinking. Children in P5 are considering the effects of possible pollution on the nearby burn. Where children are interested in activities such as this, they work hard and do not need to be supervised closely. However, at

other times groups of children lose concentration and do not work so well. Overall, children do not have enough opportunities to work together on tasks in class. Children are enthusiastic about the school netball and gardening clubs. Many are successfully learning to play musical instruments. The residential weekend every two years for older children helps them to work and live together. The headteacher is working to expand the range of experiences for children. At all stages, children can use digital cameras well, and computers to carry out research on the internet, and for writing and mathematics. All are learning to speak French. They understand how early man and ancient Egyptians lived, and how Scotland's history developed after the wars of independence. Children are developing their creativity and appreciation of music and art and design. Older children have used their skills and knowledge of technology to explore the structures within the Bird's Nest stadium at the time of the Olympic Games. Overall standards of attainment in English language and mathematics have remained consistent. Almost all children are making good progress in mathematics and most do so in reading and writing. In English language, children at all stages talk enthusiastically about their work and interests. However, from P4 onwards, they are not good at listening to others, either in groups or for information, and in taking turns to give their views. The majority of children read regularly for enjoyment. Older children who act as reading buddies for young children are helping to encourage reading habits across the school. Standards of handwriting and spelling are improving. Children write for a range of styles and purposes. They are beginning to understand what is needed to improve their writing as teachers give them better feedback. In mathematics, children can use their skills in measuring and carrying out calculations in a wide range of situations, including practical work like making model castles. Older children have been setting up a database using a questionnaire they designed. A significant number of children across the school are poor at carrying out mental calculations quickly and accurately. Their skills in literacy and numeracy are not yet well developed or used in other areas of learning.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Teachers provide children with a range of well-planned experiences and activities. Visiting teachers for art and design, French and music give valuable support. Activities such as planning for the re-opening of Laurencekirk railway station have involved children in reflecting on methods of transport and sustainability. Staff have begun planning to develop their religious and moral education programme as the first stage of their work on implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. Recently, many school resources have been modernised and improved. However, the school curriculum focuses too much on working through resources and not enough on what skills children have to learn. This limits children's progress from stage to stage, though staff are beginning to address this. In key areas such as science and technology, listening and talking, and children's personal and social development, there is no advice for staff to make sure that children's learning progresses well from stage to stage. Children take part in physical education lessons, and are physically very active at breaks. However, they do not all receive two hours of physical education each week in line with national advice.

Staff know the children very well and are sensitive and supportive to their needs. They plan classwork carefully to help children make progress from day to day, and give them help when required. Some of the tasks are very imaginative, and hold children's attention and enthusiasm. Classroom assistants and the support for learning teacher also give well-judged help. Effective additional support is given to a small group of children who need this to help them make progress in their learning or improve their social skills. However, teachers do not use questioning effectively enough to check children's understanding. As a result, they do not always ensure that children make progress at an appropriate pace or understand what they need to do to improve.

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

Staff have developed strong relationships with parents, who feel that the new headteacher is open and approachable. Any concerns they have are dealt with effectively. The school keeps parents informed of its work through regular, interesting newsletters. In one of these the headteacher has shared 'top 10 tips' on how parents could help their child with learning at home. The Parent Council is well involved in supporting the life and work of the school. It raises funding for resources, and organises social events such as the summer fair. Parents can view new resources which are being used in health education, but are not yet involved in developing the school's curriculum. Redmyre Primary School plays a full part in the Mearns Academy cluster. Joint activities with other primary schools include the animation project. These help children to mix together before they moved to Mearns Academy. The community worker and learning support staff from the Academy support vulnerable children at this time. The P1 to P3 teacher works closely with staff from nursery schools to support children moving into P1. A behaviour support specialist and the educational psychologist work very well with school staff to support a few children with particular needs. Visiting teachers play a strong role in the school, along with occasional visitors such as 'soccer scholars'. Children from the school successfully take part in the local rotary club quiz.

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

Staff are working well together to improve children's learning experiences. They have increased the range of after-school activities by introducing netball and badminton. Staff work positively with children to produce the annual, very successful Christmas show. Children have been actively involved in drawing up new playground and classroom rules. The pupil council has produced plans to introduce new playground games, and is consulting with other children

on this. Children are becoming more aware of their local environment, and the need to improve it. The school is close to achieving the green flag award from Eco-Schools Scotland. Children are planning to brighten up the underpass which is the main route to school for most of them. They took part in celebrations to mark the re-opening of the local railway station. They are actively involved in charity work, such as the 'jeans for genes' events, Red Nose Day, and in supporting senior citizens through harvest food sharing. The headteacher, and other staff, are sensitive to children's views, but don't yet gather these in an organised way. Recent school improvement plans have not had a major impact on improving children's experiences and attainment.

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

Staff are careful to ensure children's safety in the school. They are clear about procedures surrounding child protection, checking absence, giving medication, and preventing bullying. Staff also make sure that children are aware of how to keep themselves safe and to eat healthily. The school is working towards a commended award for health promotion. Children feel safe and well looked after in the school, and they get on well with each other and with staff. Overall, staff have high expectations for children's behaviour, attainment and achievement. However, some children express concerns about the behaviour of a few classmates. There are too many occasions where groups of children do not behave well or respectfully, and distract each other in class. Children's success, including success in the community, is celebrated in class, at assemblies, and in newsletters. Arrangements here have changed recently, and members of the pupil council feel that achievements are not as well celebrated as before. Staff are beginning to set learning targets for children so that they can fully share in expectations for attainment. The school has suitable arrangements for religious observance. Children also celebrate other religions and cultures, and the school plans to expand this. It needs to raise more awareness of current equalities issues amongst children.

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

The new headteacher recognises the many strengths of the school, and areas where improvements are needed. The school evaluates its work regularly. This has led to some improvements, such as in approaches to health promotion. However, in the past the school has been too positive about the quality of children's learning and attainment. As a result, little progress had been made to these, or to the development of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The headteacher is now collecting the views of children, parents and all staff, and plans to do this systematically. She monitors teachers' plans, and observes classroom activities. Teaching staff are reflecting more on their own practice, and are keen to improve. They are aware of the need to involve children more fully in their own learning. By developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching, the school will be well placed to continue to improve.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that 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 following this inspection. The District Inspector will remain in contact with the education authority to discuss progress with the school's procedures for evaluating its own work. 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.

- Engage children more actively in their learning to raise attainment in listening, talking and mental mathematics, and help some children to improve their behaviour.
- Develop the curriculum in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, and reduce reliance on published schemes of work.
- Further develop approaches to self-evaluation.

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 Redmyre Primary School.

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

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

The curriculum	weak
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

HM Inspector: Brian Stewart
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