



**Carrick Knowe Primary  
School and Nursery Class  
The City of Edinburgh  
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**

Carrick Knowe Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves an area in the western suburbs of Edinburgh. The roll was 474, including 99 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in May 2011. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2009/2010. The headteacher took up post in August 2010. Prior to his appointment, the school had a series of acting headteachers in post.

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

- Enthusiastic, well-motivated and friendly children who are keen to learn.
- Children's confidence in their leadership roles.
- High-quality relationships between staff and children.
- The support of the Parent Council, parent-teacher association and parents in the life and work of the school.
- Positive school ethos and sense of community.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Children in the nursery are happy and well settled. They are making friends and cooperate well with each other. Increasingly, they are making choices and decisions about what they are learning. They need to be more involved in planning and talking about their learning. At the primary stages, children are enthusiastic and motivated learners. Increasingly, they are making informed choices about how and what they learn. They work well together on shared tasks. Children feel safe and well cared for in school. The majority think that they have a say in making the way they learn in school better. Children regularly reflect on their learning using their 'How am I doing?' booklets. As a result, they are developing an awareness of their progress in learning and what to do to improve. Overall, they do not receive enough high-quality feedback on their learning.

In the nursery, children are beginning to show increased confidence through a range of enterprise and eco activities. They bake cakes to raise funds for charity and regularly grow, tend and harvest fruit and vegetables. They are capable of taking on more responsibility and developing greater independence across the playroom. At the primary stages, children are learning essential personal and social skills and respond well to their many responsibilities. They raise considerable funds to support local, national and international charities. Older children show good leadership and organisational skills in their roles as house captains, sports captains and environmental wardens. They take their responsibilities seriously and are good at helping younger children. At P7, children's confidence and independence benefitted from a residential trip. Children are making some use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to support their learning and develop their research skills. Overall, their ICT skills are not well enough developed. A significant number of children improve their physical abilities by taking part in various out-of-school activities such as football, netball, gymnastics and dance.

In the nursery, most children are developing appropriate listening skills and speak confidently with others during play activities. They enjoy looking at books and sharing stories with their friends. Most children show an interest in writing and a few write their name with confidence. Most children can count to ten and can recognise and match simple shapes. At the primary stages, the school does not have a clear enough view of children's progress as they move through the school. Children are making good progress in English and literacy, and a few are making very good progress. They contribute well to group discussions, listening attentively to each other and expressing their views. They are confident readers and can talk well about favourite authors and characters. There is scope to improve the quality of children's writing and build more on what they already know and can do. They confidently apply their knowledge of Scot's language in their writing. In mathematics, children's progress is varied within and across stages. Children benefit from talking about their learning and explaining their answers. Their skills in making mental calculations are not sufficiently well developed. They confidently use a range of graphs

and charts to interpret and display information. They can identify and apply a range of ways to solve simple problems. Children are making good progress in learning French and Mandarin. They are making very good progress in learning to speak fluently using Scot's language.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

In the nursery, children benefit from a play-based curriculum. Staff should provide increased opportunities for children to develop their skills in early language and mathematics through play. Across the primary stages, children experience a broad curriculum, including developing their skills in enterprise, creativity and citizenship. The balance of experiences in different curricular areas needs to be improved and monitored better across the school. Not all children benefit from two hours of high-quality physical education each week. An Active Schools sports coordinator and specialist teachers for physical education and music help to enhance children's experiences. The curriculum is widened by a range of visits and visitors. These include regular trips to Edinburgh Zoo and local museums. Across the school, staff are reviewing plans and teaching approaches as they become increasingly familiar with Curriculum for Excellence. Overall, staff need to take a more coordinated approach to developing the curriculum to ensure there is sufficient challenge, breadth and progression in learning across all curricular areas.

In the nursery, staff provide a range of suitable activities and resources to meet the needs of most children. At the primary stages, staff plan tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for most children. Topic work builds well on children's interests and helps them make links across curricular areas. Homework tasks are varied and children can choose different ways of presenting their work. In a few lessons, classwork is not always well enough pitched or challenging enough to meet the needs all children. All teachers share the purposes of learning with children and check children's understanding during the lesson. Across the school, teachers know children very well. The support for learning teacher provides very effective help for children

experiencing difficulty in their learning. Appropriate individualised learning plans and specialist support are provided where needed.

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

The school works well with a range of partners, including the dyslexia service, to support children's learning. Effective partnerships with the Parent Council, parent-teacher association, business partners and parents help enrich children's learning. Strong links with the *Confucius Hub* at St George's School for Girls are helping children learn about the Chinese culture. School and class newsletters keep parents well informed. Parents feel that the school website could be used more effectively to share the life and work of the school. They are informed about their child's progress through reports, "How am I doing?" booklets and parent consultations. Staff consult parents about health education. Home visits and a programme of Peer Education Early Partnership sessions support children and families prior to joining the nursery. Children are very well supported in making transitions from nursery to primary, from shared placements and from primary to secondary school. The school is good at sorting out any complaints it receives.

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

Children have an appropriate say in decisions and good opportunities to improve the school and the wider community. They confidently and enthusiastically take on lead roles. Older children act as buddies to their younger peers. Others represent, responsibly, the views of their classmates on the pupils' council and eco committee. Commendably, the school has achieved its second green Eco-Schools Scotland award. Across the school, children's achievements are recognised and celebrated well through assemblies, newsletters and bright wall displays. The school uses an appropriate range of self-evaluation

approaches to identify improvements in the nursery and primary stages. Staff demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are beginning to share best practice to improve learning and teaching. Actions to improve children's listening and talking skills and engagement in mathematics have had a positive impact. The school needs to further develop their approaches to self-evaluation to be clearer about the impact of planned improvements.

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

The school has a positive ethos with a caring, motivating environment and a strong sense of community. Staff have very positive relationships with children and set high expectations for behaviour and attendance. They need to have higher expectations for the achievement of all children. Children are polite and well mannered. They feel supported to make healthy life choices. Most children enjoy learning at school and think that they are treated fairly and with respect. Their understanding of different cultures and how people from across the world live is developing well. This is strengthened through their links with a school in China. All staff are trained in child protection. With support from the local chaplains, the school provides appropriate opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher is very supportive of staff and the positive promotion of the school. Since his appointment, he has established positive relationships with parents, partners and the local community. He recognises the need to now communicate his vision for the school to all stakeholders, to ensure that all share a common sense of purpose and direction. The depute headteachers provide a high level of care, support and encouragement to staff, parents and children. Teachers are actively developing new learning activities and ways of teaching. They need further guidance and direction to move forward with

Curriculum for Excellence. Senior managers need to take a more strategic lead in driving forward school improvement. In partnership with the education authority, Carrick Knowe Primary School and nursery class has the capacity to improve further.

## **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.

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

- Continue to improve and develop the curriculum using the principles of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Working closely with children, staff and parents, build on existing approaches to self-evaluation to bring about sustained improvements in learning, teaching and achievement.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were two recommendations, both of which had been addressed.

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 Carrick Knowe Primary School and Nursery Class.

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>

Nursery class

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Children's 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 and nursery class.

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

**HM Inspector:** Fiona Robertson  
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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