



**Dounby Community School
and Nursery Class
Orkney Islands Council
18 May 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMI) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² 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. 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.

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

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Dounby Community School is a non-denominational primary school with a nursery class. It serves the Harray, Sandwick and Birsay areas of mainland Orkney. The roll was 137, including 48 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in March 2010. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2008/2009. A new headteacher was appointed in August 2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children are happy in school and enthusiastic about learning.
- Warm, welcoming ethos.
- Children's progress in learning in the nursery.
- The positive impact of the new headteacher on taking forward school improvement.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery are happy in learning, well settled and confident. They use a range of investigative and problem-solving skills well. However routine group activity interrupts children's involvement in play and reduces the amount of time they have to develop their ideas. In the primary classes, children are motivated and enthusiastic in their learning. They are becoming more actively involved in learning following recent improvements in the activities they are given. They can explain clearly their skills in writing but are not yet able to talk clearly about their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers need to ensure these skills are improved. Children use information and communications technology effectively to enhance their learning.

All children contribute actively to the life of the school. They readily take on responsibilities. This helps them to develop a wide range of important skills, including leadership and personal independence. Most children feel that the school is helping them become confident. Children in the nursery are developing confidence by, for example, performing in the Christmas concert and singing for the senior citizens. More opportunities should be provided to develop individual

responsibility by involvement in whole school initiatives, for example the Eco Committee. Children in the primary classes are developing their talents and skills in art and design and music particularly well. Most children from P4 to P7 sing in the choir and many are learning to play a musical instrument. Children in P6 have their own 'my space' on GLOW.

In the nursery, almost all children are making very good progress in developing early literacy and numeracy skills. Most can write their names. They are aware of numbers and use counting well in their play. At the primary stages, the proportion of children attaining appropriate levels in English language and mathematics has gone down in recent years. Most children achieve national levels of attainment in reading and mathematics. Only the majority attain these levels in writing, although children's current classwork indicates that writing skills are beginning to improve. Most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Children who require additional support in their learning are making good progress. In English language, children listen attentively to instructions. They talk confidently and clearly in groups and to adults. By P7, most children read fluently and with expression. They enjoy reading books for pleasure. They are now writing for a variety of stimulating purposes across the curriculum including, at P1, about chickens hatching. Across the school the presentation of children's work in their jotters needs to be improved. In mathematics, most children carry out mental and written calculations confidently and accurately. At the early stages, children add and subtract to 20 well. By P7, children use fractions and decimals securely. In all classes, children handle information using graphs confidently and work well with shape and measurement. Children at the upper stages need to learn more about databases and spreadsheets. Most children can solve mathematical problems but are less confident in discussing the strategies they need to use.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery, staff provide a broad curriculum based on play, linked to *Curriculum for Excellence*. They give children responsibility for their learning, including by using 'big book' planning. At the primary stages, staff provide a range of opportunities to support children's progress across almost all aspects of their development and learning. Staff are beginning to review the curriculum taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are not yet linking learning across subjects well enough. A new programme for health and wellbeing has led to children understanding healthy lifestyles. Children's citizenship skills are being developed well, partly through the religious education programme and through involvement with the local community. Visitors are invited to the school to help develop children's enthusiasm and interest in learning by sharing with them their own knowledge and skills. The curriculum is enriched by visiting specialists in music including instrumental tuition, art and physical education. All children benefit from two hours of good-quality physical education each week.

In the nursery, staff know children well as individuals. Staff questioning and discussion during free play is skilled and helps children think about their learning. They now need to review how time is allocated to increase children's involvement in more challenging learning experiences. In many primary class lessons, tasks and activities are not sufficiently challenging and the pace of learning is too slow. In writing, teachers involve children in discussing their learning targets. They now need to do this across the curriculum. Staff should work with children to help them to identify their next steps in learning. Children who need additional support for their learning are clearly identified and well supported. Almost all teachers give clear explanations and explain the purposes of lessons to children. Teachers set an appropriate range of homework tasks.

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

Staff work well with parents, members of the local community and other agencies to support children's learning and wellbeing. Information on children's learning is shared with parents through regular informal discussion, displays, parents' evenings, and children's personal folders. Parents are consulted appropriately about health education. The school has effective procedures for dealing with any complaints. The Parent Council and the fundraising group '*Friends of Dounby*' offer valuable support to the school. The school works closely with the Community Council to organise local events and has established strong links with the local church. Staff support children well as they move from the nursery class to P1 and from P7 to Stromness Academy.

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

Children at all stages have opportunities to help improve the school through class and school councils. The Eco Committee has helped the school achieve its first green flag. Many children at the upper stages take on responsibilities, for example by being *reading buddies* to the pre-school children and by organising a programme of playground games for all classes. Children across the school have recently worked with the headteacher to identify the national level at which they are writing and to plan their next steps. This has been an important step forward in the school's approach to self-evaluation. In all classes, children are beginning to take an active role in planning topic work. Staff readily contribute to the school's and cluster schools' improvement initiatives. The headteacher monitors the work of the school very well. He now needs to work closely with all staff to ensure their combined self-evaluation activities improve children's learning experiences.

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

The school has a warm and welcoming ethos. Staff have recently worked with children and parents to review its vision and values. This has had a positive impact on the school's sense of purpose. Children are learning to respect and value others. Equality and diversity is promoted through festival activities and participation in many charitable events. Children are well behaved and have good relationships with their teachers. They have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe and well cared for in the school. All staff have a clear understanding of approaches to protecting children. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and attitude to learning. In a number of lessons, the expectations of children's achievements need to be increased. The school celebrates children's successes at assemblies. The school provides regular opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher has set a very clear sense of direction for the school. This includes reviewing roles and responsibilities of staff and a renewed sense of purpose to make sure children are safe and achieving. He has shared this successfully with staff, children and parents. He has already gained the respect of all stakeholders. He has given staff a clear lead in how to take forward school improvement. Leading by example, he has introduced robust approaches to evaluating the progress of the school, for example, by working closely with children to improve writing. Staff work very well as a team and provide a caring learning environment for children. The headteacher and staff are working together to improve approaches to self-evaluation and consequently, the school is well placed to improve.

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.

- Improve children's learning in English language and mathematics to raise levels of attainment.
- Increase children's responsibility for their own learning, including by planning their own next steps.
- Ensure all tasks and activities meet the learning needs of each individual child.
- Improve self-evaluation to increase its impact on the quality of learning.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class one recommendation was made, it has 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 Dounby Community School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very 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: Jacqueline Coulter
18 May 2010

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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Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600 236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Where the school has a nursery class, you can contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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