

This report tells you about the quality of education in the school. We describe how children benefit from learning here. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. We also look at the ways in which we do this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents and services which support the children. We also comment on how well our 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.

The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

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

Onthank Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. The school also has a Gaelic Department and Gaelic nursery class. It serves the Northwest area of Kilmarnock. The report was written in October 2011 at which time the roll was 585, including 30 in the Gaelic Department.. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2010-11.

## 2. Particular strengths of the school

- Highly motivated children who enjoy their learning.
- The school's approaches to developing its curriculum.
- The quality of teamwork across the staff and staff's capacity for taking forward school improvements.
- The active role of staff at all levels in sharing leadership for learning.
- The contribution of the pupil support team, including classroom assistants, to meeting learning needs.
- The impact of active approaches to learning in developing children's independence effectively.

### 3. Examples of good practice

- Active approaches to learning and teaching.
- Whole school approaches to developing the ethos within the school

### 4. How well do children learn and achieve?

#### Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, children enjoy learning. They choose activities confidently, work successfully together and share their ideas well during play. The wide range of experiences they have is helping almost all children to make very good progress. They are developing their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing through the medium of Gaelic very well. In play activities and when they use computers, many count accurately and have a good understanding of mathematical shapes. They now need more chances to plan their own learning and to develop their activities.

Across the primary stages, children are developing a very good understanding of what they do well and how to improve their work. As a result, they comment on their own and each other's work very helpfully. They take pride in their work, share their views confidently and feel that teachers value their suggestions. Children work together very well, for example to discuss ideas, solve problems, create displays and story writing. They are making good progress in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics.. Many children achieve national levels of attainment earlier than might normally be expected. Attainment in reading and writing is improving and is in line with of similar schools. In mathematics attainment is above the average of similar schools. In Gaelic Medium education nearly all children achieve expected national levels of attainment. Children tackle mental and written calculations and solve problems well. They explain their thinking clearly and the approaches they use to reach their answers. In science, they investigate evidence methodically, think things through well and report their conclusions clearly. Children have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and are making very good progress in physical

education. Children do not yet meet the agreed target of 2hrs physical activity a week

Across the school, children achieve in a wide range of activities and are developing very good personal and social skills. In the nursery class, children make good use of their observational skills when they paint pictures. They use props imaginatively during play activities. Across the school, children have been working hard with staff to achieve an Eco-Schools Scotland award at green flag standard. They regularly work creatively to raise significant amounts for national and international charities. At the primary stages, they have performed in very successful school shows and some children in the Gaelic department have achieved awards in the Glasgow Mod. Children are developing effective presentation skills, including using information and communications technology confidently.

#### Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Activities in the Gaelic nursery class are well designed to support all children in making progress, particularly in early literacy and numeracy. They learn well through play. At the primary stages, well-planned activities help develop a broad range of skills. Commendably, staff give children regular chances to use and extend their literacy skills in different areas of their learning. The school is now making arrangements for developing its curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Depute Head Teacher and Principal Teachers carry out their remit as leaders of curriculum developments and improvements very effectively. Principal teachers work closely with teachers and senior managers to help ensure children have opportunities to make choices about what they need to learn and how best to learn. They plan creatively to help children link what they are learning to their understanding of the wider world.

Across the school, staff know children very well and are very sensitive to their needs. They make classrooms interesting places to learn and respond to children's ideas and interests when they plan lessons. Tasks and activities are at the right level of difficulty for most children. Staff provide children with different ways to make progress by ensuring that they have a good balance of individual and group activities. Well-planned tasks help children give clear feedback to help them build on their strengths and improve their

work. Homework activities support what children are learning in lessons and help them prepare for the next stage in their learning. Children and teachers use computers and interactive whiteboards well to support learning. Pupil support teachers and classroom assistants respond to children's individual needs very well. They work closely with class teachers and partner agencies to provide a high quality of support for children experiencing difficulties with their learning. These children are making very good progress towards meeting their personal targets for learning. The school has developed good pastoral transition arrangements from nursery to primary and from primary to secondary where curricular links are established. It has effective partnerships with a number of agencies such as the bilingual and the area network support staff.

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

The school works closely with the active and very supportive Parent Council and Parent Teacher Association. Staff help children to make a confident move into the nursery class and from the different nursery classes into P1. At the primary stages, children benefit from the school's effective links with James Hamilton Academy and associated primary schools. These links assist staff in sharing good practice in planning and teaching approaches, and support children very well when they transfer to secondary school. Successful partnerships with educational and health support services, the chaplains and local businesses help to improve the quality of children's learning experiences. A strong feature of the school is the way its partnerships help children to understand and experience their local and wider community.

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

Many children take on extra responsibilities to help improve the school. For example, they take part in the eco or school council, or act as prefects, road safety officers, reading buddies and playground mediators. Most children think the school council is a good way to express their views and to help improve the school. The council influenced notable improvements to the playground and toilets. Each year, the school surveys the views of groups of children on their

experiences and what they would like to see improved. Teachers also ask children regularly for their views of their learning and use their ideas to improve the learning environment. Staff work very well together as a team. They are developing their learning and teaching practices effectively as members of working parties and visits to other schools. Staff keep parents informed about children's work and progress at curriculum meetings and parents' evenings and in a helpful annual report. Next session the school needs to develop a report that reflects the new curriculum. The school encourages parental contact throughout the year.

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

Children and staff have worked together very well to create an atmosphere of mutual respect across the school. Teachers explain clearly to children what they are learning and how to succeed. Skilful, open questions encourage children to think things through for themselves and staff value children's confidence and independence. They encourage all children to achieve in a wide range of activities. Staff plan well to meet children's health, emotional and social needs and are very clear about their responsibilities for child protection. Next session teachers should work and plan together to deliver the new curriculum. Children behave very well. They are very proud of each other's successes which are celebrated in classrooms and at assemblies, and through attractive displays of their work around the school. Equality and diversity are promoted well throughout the school. Children learn about different cultures and religions through class work and project. Staff and children have worked very hard to promote a culture of 'zero tolerance' of bullying. Children tell us that bullying was very rare and that staff dealt very well with any incidents that occurred.

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

The school has clear aims and values. The Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher involve children, staff and parents in discussions to agree the school's strengths and areas for development. The head teacher and depute monitor learning and teaching thoroughly and provide well-organised, detailed feedback for teachers. Senior managers and principal teachers work very well together to encourage and support staff to

develop improvements. Staff do so energetically, through effective working groups and projects, including work with colleagues in the James Hamilton Academy Learning Partnership. They are developing a clear understanding of how to use self-evaluation to improve learning and achievement. The school is well placed to build on existing good practice to take forward further improvements

Quality indicators help schools to assess 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*.

Here are our evaluations for Onthank Primary School, Gaelic Department and Nursery Class.

Improvements in performance	Very Good
Learners' experiences	Very good
Meeting learning needs	Very good

The curriculum	Very Good
Improvement through self-evaluation	Good