

**Ardler Primary School
Dundee City Council
31 October 2006**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Ardler Primary School in August 2004. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

HM Inspectors revisited the school in May 2006 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

Ardler Primary School had experienced several staffing changes since the inspection, including three different acting depute headteachers. Since August 2005, the school had been host to the early years classes of Brackens Primary School. This situation will continue until the new building for the merged Brackens/Macalpine Primary School is completed. The school was being led by the acting headteacher who was in post at the time of the previous inspection.

The school had made good progress towards improving its overall effectiveness. Senior managers had introduced a number of measures which had led to improvement in the quality of learning and teaching. Staff had been appropriately involved in taking these measures forward. Steps had been taken to increase the pace of learning in both English language and mathematics. The school had purchased new resources to provide greater challenge for pupils in the upper stages. Staff had reviewed their programmes in both English language and mathematics to take account of HMIE recommendations. The acting headteacher had introduced regular and systematic arrangements to monitor and evaluate learning and teaching in classes. Senior managers met regularly with staff to discuss plans and provided formal feedback to them. As part of a council initiative 'Learning Together in Dundee', staff were making greater use of strategies which involved pupils more in their own learning. Teachers were making more effective use of assessment information to identify pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. Remits of senior managers had been reviewed and shared with staff to support continued school improvement.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in August 2004 identified five main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Improve attainment in English language and mathematics.

The school had made adequate progress in addressing this main point for action.

The overall proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing had improved between 2004 and 2006. However, by

P7 a significant minority of pupils were not achieving expected levels of attainment. By this stage, pupils read regularly for their own enjoyment and were motivated by books and stories. Higher attaining pupils had a good knowledge of language and demonstrated this through some very good pieces of extended work. They wrote interesting stories and poems and paid good attention to detail. At P5 to P7, standards in spelling, handwriting and presentation of written work were inconsistent.

The overall proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding appropriate national levels of attainment in mathematics had varied between 2004 and 2006. Throughout the school, pupils' numerical skills and their mental agility were developing well. They had good skills in handling money and at all stages had a good knowledge of shape, position and movement. By P7, pupils showed good skills in interpreting graphs and charts and in using information and communications technology (ICT) skills to handle information. By this stage, the majority of pupils had sufficient awareness of a range of strategies to solve problems in a clear and logical fashion. By this stage, pupils did not always have a good understanding of fractions. Throughout the school, pupils did not apply their skills in mathematics sufficiently in other curricular areas.

3.2 Increase the level of pace and challenge in learning and teaching.

The school had made good progress in taking forward this main point for action.

Most teachers shared the purposes of lessons with pupils and used questions appropriately to challenge them. Support staff ably assisted pupils who needed extra help with their learning. Teachers matched tasks appropriately to pupils' preferred style of learning to help meet their needs. They were making more use of assessment information to support pupils' learning. In a few lessons in the upper stages, staff did not sufficiently differentiate work or challenge pupils enough. A few teachers still relied too much on activities which did not stimulate learning or motivate pupils sufficiently. Pupils were becoming more involved in setting their own learning targets. They participated effectively in various activities designed to make them think for themselves. Pupils had opportunities to be independent and take more responsibility for their learning. In a few lessons, pupils were not clear about the standards expected of them. In most lessons, the pace of learning was appropriate and most pupils remained focused on the work set for them. Pupils were developing their skills in ICT and applying these to elements of their classwork.

3.3 Involve more parents in school life through a more proactive approach.

The school had made good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The acting headteacher had been successful in establishing a School Board and parent-teacher association. Both were involved in school matters. The school had established a good induction programme to support children and ease their transition when they moved from nursery into P1. Parents were also involved in these school arrangements to ensure that they had sufficient information at this important time in their children's education. Parents assisted staff with fundraising activities and accompanied pupils on school outings. The acting headteacher had plans in place to run curricular workshops to provide parents with more detailed information on their children's learning. She also planned further opportunities for them to participate in various classroom activities.

3.4 Ensure a greater focus on improving leadership for learning.

The acting headteacher and staff had made good progress in taking forward this main point for action.

The acting headteacher had focused well on evaluating and improving key areas of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. An acting depute headteacher had assisted her well in taking this forward and had provided good advice to staff. Senior managers' remits had been reviewed, ensuring a stronger focus in supporting learning and teaching. Senior staff had supported class teachers and advised them on how to organise and manage classes and encourage pupils' independent learning. Senior managers had also assisted staff to develop different teaching styles to help them meet pupils' needs more appropriately. They had demonstrated different approaches to teachers and taught alongside them in classes. The acting headteacher had appropriately introduced an element of personal learning planning for pupils to involve them more in their own learning. She had encouraged staff to share learning intentions with pupils and involve them more in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. Senior managers were developing strategies to ensure pupils' positive behaviour, and these strategies were leading to better learning in classes. The acting headteacher had put in place appropriate early intervention strategies to raise attainment and had achieved success at P1 to P4.

3.5 Improve monitoring and evaluation arrangements to ensure high quality education for all.

The school had made good progress in taking forward this main point for action.

The school's arrangement for reviewing its work had improved the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences. Senior managers observed lessons, identified strengths and gave advice to teachers on how to improve their practice further. They regularly monitored forward plans and gave detailed feedback to teachers. They scrutinised pupils' work and worked alongside teachers in classes in an effort to ensure a consistently high standard of teaching. Senior managers tracked pupils' progress and discussed their attainment at meetings with staff. The acting headteacher, in consultation with staff, had introduced systematic approaches to self-evaluation that focused on improving the quality of learning and teaching. Staff were involved in reviewing school practice and in identifying future

areas for improvement. Although staff had been meaningfully involved in evaluating their own classes, they had not yet been sufficiently involved in discussing and reviewing whole school attainment. The acting headteacher met regularly with the council's quality improvement officer to monitor and evaluate standards in the school.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the school had made good progress in meeting the main points for action identified in the inspection report of August 2004. Staff morale was high and teachers were confident about making further improvements to the quality of education they were providing. The school provided pupils with good opportunities to take part in a varied range of activities. Senior managers monitored planning, teaching and attainment targets, and gave useful feedback to staff. They had won the confidence of staff, and worked well together as a team. The improvements that had been made had not yet had full impact on all aspects of attainment.

As a result of the progress made in meeting the main points for action, HM Inspectors will make no further visits to the school in connection with the report of August 2004.

Moira Cummings HMI
District Inspector

31 October 2006

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the acting headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

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Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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