



**St Cuthbert's RC
Primary School
The City of Edinburgh
Council
5 May 2009**

We published a report on St Cuthbert's RC Primary School in June 2007. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in February 2009. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Examples of good practice
4. How well do children learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

1. The school

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School is a denominational school which serves an area in the west of Edinburgh. Twelve children with additional support needs arising from autism spectrum disorder attend two language and communication classes (LCC). The principal teacher led the school as acting headteacher from August 2007 to September 2008 due to the headteacher's absence on sick leave.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Confident children who have responded well to additional responsibilities and higher expectations.
- Commitment and teamwork across all staff in improving the school.
- Learning experiences which motivate children and help them achieve.

3. Examples of good practice

- Challenging learning.
- Approaches to understanding emotions in the language and communication classes.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the school, including the classes for children with language and communication disorders, children are motivated learners. All know what they need to do to improve their learning. They enjoy activities which give them responsibilities. These include enterprise activities and reading circles in P7, in which children choose a book and organise discussion about the text. At all stages, children respond enthusiastically to learning challenges introduced to develop their ability to think for themselves, work independently and solve problems in groups. In the LCC, children are learning to talk about emotions through an imaginative activity based on a popular television programme. Overall, children are more confident in their skills in

English language and mathematics. They are more skilled at talking in groups and have learned to listen to the views of others more carefully. They read with greater confidence and are more able to talk about what they have read and how writers achieve effects. Children build more consistently on writing skills as they go through school, resulting in improved progress. In mathematics, children's skills in problem solving are improving. School staff are making an effective start to looking at aspects of the national initiative *Curriculum for Excellence*.

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

Parents and staff continue to work well together to support children's learning. Children now produce an effective newsletter which tells parents about what they are learning in school. Teachers and children are working together to identify personal learning targets which are shared effectively with parents. Parents are actively involved in developing projects which improve children's learning experiences, such as engaging business partners to work with the school. The support for learning teacher supports children's learning very well. Under her guidance, learning assistants provide individual programmes which help children make effective progress in aspects of their learning. School staff work very well in partnership with the literacy support unit and speech and language therapist to support children's learning. The school has very strong links with its local community. Children benefit from improved school grounds as a result of funds provided by the business partnership.

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

The school has significantly increased the involvement of children in the life of the school. Children now elect the pupil council, which is more involved in many aspects of the school's work. Pupil council members, working closely with their class mates, business partners

and parents, created a peace garden and a new wildlife garden in the school. Children are actively involved in planning health initiatives, including the popular health week. Staff work very effectively together to take forward school improvements. In the absence of the headteacher, the acting headteacher involved all staff in regular review of progress towards planned improvements. Staff take the lead in aspects of improvement. Senior managers observe the work of classes regularly and effectively discuss their observations of children's learning experiences with staff. Staff monitor the progress of individual children very carefully, with a focus on ensuring each child makes appropriate progress. As a result of these approaches, children's learning experiences have improved. Children are making better progress and overall attainment levels are beginning to improve.

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

Teachers' expectations of children are higher. Staff monitor progress more closely, and identify where children can respond to greater challenge and make more appropriate progress. Children feel safe and happy in school. They now feel more confident that they can talk to staff about any concerns they have. Children feel that they are treated fairly in school. The toilets for pupils at the upper stages are now appropriately improved.

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

The management team, with the support of staff and the education authority, have effectively achieved improvements across the school. They monitor children's progress and learning experiences more closely. Staff are involved in working together to take forward improvements. They lead aspects of development. Overall, St Cuthbert's RC Primary School now performs much better and shows a strong capacity to continue to improve.

9. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of improvement since the original inspection. The school now performs well overall. Children are more effectively involved in their learning and in the life of the school. Children are achieving more overall. The quality of learning and attainment in key areas has improved. We will make no further visits in connection with the inspection report of June 2007.

District Inspector: Christine Knight
5 May 2009

To find out more about inspections or get an electronic copy of this report go to www.hmie.gov.uk. Please contact the Business Management and Communications Team (BMCT) if you wish to enquire about our arrangements for translated or other appropriate versions.

If you wish to comment about any of our inspections, contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or alternatively you should write in the first instance to BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsso.org.uk.

Crown Copyright 2009
HM Inspectorate of Education