

**St Margaret's Primary School
Polmont
Falkirk Council
25 April 2006**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of St Margaret's Primary School in April 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 visited the school in March 2005 and published an interim report in June 2005. HM Inspectors revisited the school in February 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

The original inspection report of April 2004 found that pupils were well cared for and happy and that the school's partnership with parents was good. However, the report identified a number of significant weaknesses in the overall quality of learning and teaching and pupils' levels of attainment in English language and mathematics. There were also weaknesses in leadership and arrangements for improving the work of the school. During the visit of February 2006, HM Inspectors found that the school had built very successfully on the promising start identified in the interim report of June 2005. The depute headteachers and principal teacher had each played a central role in providing effective leadership in addressing successfully the main points for action. Overall levels of attainment in mathematics and English language had improved, particularly in writing. Attainment in the upper stages had also increased. For example, by the end of P7, there had been a notable increase in the proportion of pupils working beyond the levels expected for their stage. Pupils had also been involved in a range of successful initiatives to develop their enterprise skills. The school was raising pupils' awareness of environmental issues and was applying for an Eco School award. As part of the *Hungry for Success* initiative the school organised information evenings for parents on healthy eating and P7 pupils managed a healthy eating tuck shop. The appointment of an active-schools coordinator had extended the range of after-school activities available to pupils. A new headteacher had been appointed to the school in November 2005. Staff morale was now very high. He had already taken a number of significant steps to improve the school's quality assurance arrangements. These included revised approaches to improving further the quality of learning and teaching in the school. He had already observed lessons across the school and provided very helpful written and oral feedback to staff. The school's capacity to improve had been much enhanced and the school was now well placed to continue to improve its work.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in April 2004 identified six 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 The school and education authority should take action to improve the overall structure and quality of the curriculum.

The school had made very good progress with this recommendation.

A working group under the leadership of a deputy headteacher had undertaken a thorough review of the curriculum across all stages. Existing guidelines to staff had been revised and arrangements for the use of flexibility time agreed with all staff. The results of this work meant that pupils at all stages now had access to a well-balanced and appropriate range of experiences across the curriculum. The school had also taken effective action to review and improve programmes in information and communications technology (ICT) and to develop a programme of research skills. Staff in the early years had improved arrangements for structured play. The headteacher had clear plans to improve the curriculum further by taking full account of *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

3.2 The school and education authority should take action to establish greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching.

Very good progress had been made in this area.

A working group had been formed under the leadership of a deputy headteacher. It had undertaken a range of effective actions. Teachers met very regularly to share good practice and to make presentations to colleagues on topics related to effective classroom practice. Staff had engaged positively in an extensive programme of staff development. Staff were consistently applying formative assessment approaches at all stages. The quality of learning and teaching across all stages was now more consistent, with some examples of exemplary practice. The school arrangements for monitoring and improving learning and teaching had been improved further under the leadership of the new headteacher.

3.3 The school and education authority should continue with plans to improve the provision for support for learning.

The school had made very good progress in this area.

The principal teacher and learning support teacher, working together with other staff, parents and pupils, had made major improvements to the provision of learning support within the school. They provided a range of very effective support for pupils and staff. Clear short- and long-term targets were set in pupils' individualised educational programmes. Pupils' progress was reviewed regularly. Parents were consulted very well and were fully engaged at all times in reviewing their child's progress. The school had arranged information evenings for parents and specific staff development for teachers on a range of appropriate topics. These had enhanced significantly the school's capacity to meet pupils' learning needs effectively. Support staff were now deployed efficiently and effectively to work with pupils in a range of contexts.

3.4 The school and education authority should take action to improve the deployment of senior managers and support staff.

The school had made very good progress with this recommendation.

Following the initial inspection, the deputy headteachers and principal teacher had taken responsibility for leading appropriate working groups. The groups had been ably led and their work had been focused very effectively on meeting the main points for action in the initial inspection report. This had given the senior promoted staff more engagement in whole-school developments. Improvements in the management and coordination of learning support across the school had also led to the more effective and efficient deployment of support staff. The school had plans to review the remits of senior staff.

3.5 The school and education authority should take action to ensure the senior management team involve staff more effectively in planning and implementing developments.

The school had made very good progress in this area.

The school had taken a number of steps to engage staff more effectively in improving the work of the school. There were daily briefing meetings for staff. All staff had contributed positively to the work of the school as members of working groups. Some unpromoted staff gave very good leadership to these groups. Arrangements for communicating and consulting with staff had improved significantly. The headteacher had made a very positive impact since his appointment. There was now a strong sense of collective purpose and teamwork throughout the school.

3.6. Address the accommodation issues raised in this report, as resources permit.

Some good progress had been made with this recommendation, but important weaknesses in some aspects of accommodation remained.

A gym hall had recently been built and provided high-quality accommodation. Other improvements included an additional toilet to meet the needs of disabled users. While the installation of door bells and phones in the hatted accommodation for classes in P6 and P7 had improved security, the exterior of the huts continued to be in poor condition. There were clear plans to address the weaknesses in classroom accommodation identified in the initial inspection. The education authority had begun a process of major refurbishment and completion of this work was planned for session 2006/07.

4. Conclusion

The school, with very effective support from the education authority, had made very good progress in meeting almost all the main points for action set in the inspection report. Under the leadership of the newly-appointed headteacher and other promoted staff, the school was now well placed to secure continuing improvement. However, despite the positive work undertaken to improve aspects of the school's accommodation, some important weaknesses remained. In view of the very good progress made, HM Inspectors will make no further

visits to the school in connection with the inspection report of April 2004. The education authority should provide HM Inspectors with a report, by December 2006, on the progress made towards implementing its plans for improving the quality of accommodation in the school.

Chris Webb HMI
District Inspector

25 April 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 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, Wellgate House (Level 5), The Wellgate, Dundee DD1 2DB or by telephoning 01382 224155. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

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