

**Dalneigh Primary School  
Inverness  
The Highland Council**

**16 March 2004**

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## **1. Background**

Dalneigh Primary School was inspected in December 2003 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2. A member of the inspection team met with a group of parents. A School Board had not been formed.

The school serves the area of Dalneigh in the city of Inverness. At the time of the inspection the roll was 237, including 21 children in the nursery class. A language support unit catered for pupils experiencing significant communication and language difficulties, including a number drawn from other primary schools in the surrounding area. Forty per cent of pupils were entitled to free school meals, which was significantly above the national level. Pupils' attendance was broadly in line with the national average.

An integrated inspection of pre-school provision was carried out at the same time by HMIE and the Care Commission and is the subject of a separate report.

## **2. Key strengths**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- A warm and welcoming environment.
- The quality of provision for pupils with additional support needs.
- Instances of very good teaching.
- The commitment of the management team to improving the quality of provision.

## **3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff**

The inspection team found that parents were very pleased with the work of the school. Parents felt that the reputation of the school within the community had improved over the past two years. Many commented on the approachability and helpfulness of the headteacher. They were concerned about the quality of the school building. Staff were positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school. Some teachers felt that inappropriate behaviour was not always dealt with satisfactorily. Some ancillary staff would welcome more involvement in making decisions. Pupils were proud of their school but they were unhappy with the appearance of the exterior of the building.

#### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

##### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

The quality of the curriculum was fair overall. Staff provided a range of suitable activities in aspects of English language and mathematics. The school had established effective liaison with the local theatre outreach worker and a link project with the local secondary school. As a result, pupils had good opportunities to develop skills in reading, art and design, and drama. Staff had recently improved the programmes for writing and expressive arts. The headteacher had reviewed and amended the times allocated to various areas of the curriculum. Additional time was now used with a view to raising attainment in English language and mathematics and improving learning and teaching in science. There were important weaknesses in the programmes for environmental studies and religious and moral education. The lack of clear programmes and advice for staff overall meant that they could not ensure that pupils developed knowledge and skills systematically, or at an appropriate pace.

Although the quality of teaching was good overall, it varied too much from class to class. This inconsistency hindered pupils from achieving their full potential. There were many instances of effective teaching. Most teachers interacted well with pupils to encourage and motivate them. They used questioning well to keep pupils focused on their work and to check their knowledge and understanding. However, some teachers did not use a sufficiently wide range of effective teaching approaches. Staff effectively involved pupils in evaluating their own work and that of others through the writing programme. They did not explain clearly enough what pupils needed to do to improve their work in other areas of the curriculum.

Most pupils were keen to learn. They generally worked well when directed by staff but they had too few opportunities to be creative or to think for themselves. In some lessons, activities were undemanding and pupils found these to be boring. The pace of learning was too slow for too many pupils. In some classes at the middle and upper stages pupils had insufficient opportunities to develop effective skills in working with others. Some older pupils demonstrated their willingness and ability to take responsibility through membership of the pupil council and serving as house captains.

##### **English language**

Overall, attainment in English language was fair. Levels of attainment fluctuated from class to class and there had been no consistent pattern of improvement over the previous three years. Teachers' expectations of pupils in listening, talking and reading were not consistent across the school and in some classes the pace of progress was too slow. Attainment in writing was steadily rising as a result of improvements to both the programme and approaches to learning and teaching. Pupils generally listened attentively and responded well to questions and instructions. Most pupils read for enjoyment and were confident in discussing a range of texts. Pupils in P3 and P7 were eager to talk in groups and share their ideas and opinions. At the early stages, pupils' skills in reading were developing well. While reading tasks were not sufficiently challenging for many pupils at the middle stages, pupils in P7 were developing good

reading skills through a project involving staff from the local secondary school. Most pupils in P1 to P3, and the majority in P4 to P7, attained appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing.

## **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was fair. In recent years the number of pupils attaining national standards had shown a steady decline. Whilst significant progress had been made in raising attainment at the early stages, attainment at P7 remained consistently below the national average. Most pupils in P1 to P4 were now achieving appropriate national levels in information handling, number, money and measurement and shape, position and movement. However, less than half were achieving these levels in P7. Pupils in P1-3 were developing good number skills. Across all stages pupils showed an increasing confidence in mental arithmetic and were able to carry out calculations accurately. Pupils at the middle and upper stages demonstrated good skills in shape, position and movement. At all stages pupils' skills in problem solving and enquiry were not well developed. Overall, pupils were insufficiently challenged and the pace of progress in their learning was too slow.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

The quality of pastoral care was very good. Staff knew their pupils well and almost all were sensitive to their social and emotional needs. The school had a range of appropriate policies, including child protection and anti-bullying, and staff were aware of their responsibilities for pupils' welfare.

Pupils requiring extra help with their work or behaviour were well supported. The support for learning teacher and a range of support staff, including the family support worker, the children's services worker and ancillary staff, liaised effectively to support pupils and their families. The headteacher had established an effective system for identifying and prioritising pupils' needs. Staff made effective use of individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils requiring additional help. Records of Needs were maintained appropriately. The school was participating in a pilot project to support pupils requiring behavioural support but it had not yet been effective in bringing about change in pupils' behaviour. The visiting teacher of physical education and ancillary staff together provided well-judged support for pupils experiencing difficulties with physical co-ordination. However, too many pupils across the school were not making progress in their learning at an appropriate rate. The school will be better placed to meet the needs of all pupils once plans to improve procedures for assessing and recording progress have been implemented. The quality of support for pupils was fair overall.

The school included a language support unit which catered for four pupils experiencing significant communication and language difficulties. Pupils were taught at times as individuals and small groups, but for most of the week they were successfully integrated into mainstream classes. The language unit was staffed by one recently appointed teacher. Pupils received high quality support from the teacher, and from the speech and language therapist and the senior educational psychologist associated with the school. The language support teacher played a key role in ensuring that pupils' needs were met effectively

through sharing assessment information with all relevant staff. Staff had prepared useful IEPs which set out clear long-term and short-term learning targets, taking account of pupils' specific language and communication needs. Staff made effective use of a wide range of approaches to provide a variety of well-judged activities. Pupils responded well, with commendable concentration. They were making steady progress towards achieving appropriate targets which included the development of important skills and knowledge in key aspects of English language, numeracy, personal and social development and, in some cases, physical development and movement. Pupils' progress was regularly reviewed throughout the school year and detailed reports were prepared in April of each session. The school had good contacts with most parents and carers and planned to involve them further in reviews of pupils' achievements and progress.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The quality of accommodation was fair. The building was in need of redecoration and refurbishment. Sections of the exterior brickwork were crumbling. A risk assessment needed to be carried out in respect of a dilapidated shelter in the playground. There was an unpleasant smell in some toilet blocks and soap was not always available. There was a spacious playground area, which included a grassed sports field. Staff worked effectively to create an attractive environment inside the building, including the effective display of pupils' work. Facilities included a computer suite, a large hall and various general-purpose rooms. Pupils did not have access to a good library facility.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The atmosphere in the school was warm and welcoming. Pupils took pride in their school and spoke positively about its achievements. Regular assemblies provided good opportunities for religious observation and for celebrating pupils' achievements. The headteacher had introduced a good behaviour management policy. However, it was not being implemented consistently by all staff. Overall the behaviour of pupils was good. Almost all showed consideration and respect to each other and to adults. Staff were committed to the school and relationships between pupils and staff were generally good. A number of staff contributed to recent developments such as the breakfast club, which met three times a week. The headteacher had given a clear lead to raising expectations of pupils' attainment. Staff had started to work as an effective team but levels of expectation were still not equally or sufficiently high across the school.

Partnership with parents and the community	The school had established good relationships with parents. Parents were appreciative and supportive of the work of the school. They supported staff fund-raising efforts. As yet, there was no parent-teacher association. A School Board had not been formed. Parents helped with some activities and concerts, and parents' evenings were generally well attended. The school provided parents with very good opportunities for informal communication throughout the year and there were regular formal meetings. Teachers provided brief written reports at the end of each session.
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## 7. Improving the school

The school had experienced a number of changes in management over the previous four years. The headteacher, in post for almost two years, provided good leadership to the school. She was well respected by parents and pupils and had established a high profile within the school and the local community. Both she and the depute headteacher demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of education provided by the school. They had clearly communicated to staff the need to raise attainment by increasing the pace of work and improving programmes of study and approaches to learning and teaching. Staff were beginning to work more effectively as a team, and this was having a positive impact on attainment in reading and mathematics in P1 to P3, and in writing across the school. The headteacher and staff, with support from the local authority, should create clear action plans for improving attainment in all areas of the curriculum.

The depute headteacher, in post for a year, supported the headteacher effectively. His teaching was a model of good practice. Although he carried out his remit very well, he was not currently given enough responsibility for quality assurance and raising attainment. The management team had a very clear understanding of what the school needed to do to improve. They had made a good start to evaluating aspects of the work of the school. They monitored attainment, teachers' plans and pupils' work. They visited classes informally and worked with groups of pupils. They now needed to monitor the quality of learning and teaching more systematically and involve staff in self-evaluation to improve attainment, learning and teaching.

The school and education authority should take action to ensure further improvement in the work of the school and to raise achievement for all its pupils. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve attainment in English language and mathematics;
- develop consistent approaches to learning and teaching across the school;
- improve the range and quality of learning experiences provided for pupils;
- review the remits of the management team;
- continue to involve all staff, pupils and parents in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and identifying priorities for improvement in a development plan with clear targets and timescales for actions; and
- address the accommodation issues identified in this report.

### **What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Dr R Duncan  
HM Inspector

16 March 2004

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- Pastoral care

### **We judged the following to be good**

- The teaching process
- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- Structure of the curriculum
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Accommodation and facilities
- Expectations and promoting achievement

### **We judged the following to be unsatisfactory**

- No aspects were found to be in this category

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<p><b>What pleased parents and carers most</b></p>	<p><b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school had a very good reputation in the local community.</li> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome in the school.</li> <li>• Staff treated children fairly and were strongly concerned for their welfare.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interior decoration and external fabric of the school building.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pleased pupils most</b></p>	<p><b>What pupils would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers explained things clearly and told them when they had done things well.</li> <li>• Teachers checked their homework.</li> <li>• The school helped them to keep safe and healthy.</li> <li>• They were able to put forward their ideas for making things better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appearance of their school.</li> <li>• Toilet facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pleased staff most</b></p>	<p><b>What staff would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication among staff and between home and school was good.</li> <li>• Pupils were enthusiastic about learning.</li> <li>• Pupils and teachers treated one another with respect.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some teachers felt that inappropriate behaviour was not always dealt with effectively.</li> <li>• Some ancillary staff felt they were not sufficiently involved in decision making and that communication between them and the management team could be better.</li> </ul>

## **How can you contact us?**

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, Culture and Sport, 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, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

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