

**Ancrum Road Primary School
Dundee City Council
25 September 2007**

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1. Background

Ancrum Road Primary School was inspected in April and May 2007 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, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

The school serves an area of west Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 376. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The welcome extended by the school to parents and other visitors.
- The development of pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT).
- Effective approaches to developing pupils' broader achievements and responsibilities.
- The school's partnership with parents and the local community.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents were very pleased with the school overall. They felt the school was well led and had a good reputation in the local area. They were positive about their children's experiences at school and found most staff welcoming and helpful. Some wanted more information about the school's priorities for improvement. Pupils liked many aspects of the school and spoke very positively about their teachers. Nearly half of them felt

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

that pupils' behaviour could be better. Some felt that staff were not always fair and consistent in promoting positive behaviour. Staff liked working in the school. They felt that communication amongst staff was effective, and that pupils were well looked after. Nearly half of staff wanted more effective approaches to dealing with indiscipline. About a third of them felt that school leadership and teamwork amongst senior managers required improvement.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was good overall, with some very good features. Almost all areas of learning were well developed to enable pupils to make steady progress. Health education and ICT were particular strengths. Staff's commitment to developing pupils' literacy skills through the education authority's *Learning Together in Dundee* programme had improved the quality of pupils' experiences and attainment. The emphasis given to enterprise activities was uneven across the school. Further time required to be given to physical education. Opportunities for pupils to learn through play were well developed at P1, with plans to extend them to other stages. Teaching was good overall, but varied too widely in quality across classes. Teachers worked hard to establish a positive atmosphere for learning. Most varied lessons appropriately to engage and maintain pupils' interest. They often shared effectively with pupils what they expected them to learn. In most cases, teachers gave clear instructions and explanations. Some used open-ended questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. Quite often, teachers involved pupils effectively in helping to present lessons. In a few lessons, teachers over-directed pupils' activities or did not engage in sufficient dialogue with pupils. Teachers issued regular homework which, in some classes, was varied, interesting and challenging.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was good. In most lessons, pupils were well motivated and hardworking and made steady progress in learning. Most of them behaved well and, when required, could work well with minimal supervision. In most lessons, pupils had good opportunities to develop independent learning skills. They collaborated effectively and responsibly during paired and group activities. This happened, for example, as pupils practised basketball and badminton skills and, at P6, when they rehearsed political speeches for a mock election. Pupils at P5 discussed potential risks in everyday situations very responsibly as part of health education. In a few lessons, pupils became restless when activities were insufficiently varied to hold their interest. In some drama and physical education lessons taught in the hall and gymnasium, pupils' learning was frequently interrupted by the passage of other classes through the area.

The school took very good steps to promote pupils' wider achievements. School teams achieved high levels of success at local level in a variety of sports, including athletics, football and swimming. Staff gave importance to developing pupils' skills of citizenship. For example, pupils learned first-hand about democracy by participating in a mock election. Twelve pupils served responsibly as library monitors. Pupils at P5, P6 and P7 assisted younger pupils with reading and other aspects of classwork. Across the school, pupils were involved in raising funds for charity. Most notably, they were

supporting two schools in Malawi. In the process, they developed some valuable enterprise skills through organising fundraising events for parents and the community, and by making artefacts for sale. The school choir and pipers entertained residents in a local care home for the elderly. Pupils learned a very broad range of skills in using ICT, including creating simple computer games and controlling robotic models. Pupils in the Web Club had developed an attractive and very informative website for the school intranet, updated regularly with ‘blogs’.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good and improving. Most pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading, listening and talking. The majority did so in writing. Increasing numbers of pupils were attaining these levels earlier than might be expected, particularly at P2. Pupils who were unable to reach national levels were making good progress in work suited to their needs. At all stages, pupils listened attentively to their teachers and to each other. They took part in lively group and class discussions. Across the school, pupils read regularly for pleasure and spoke readily about their favourite books and authors. At P7, pupils could discuss the main ideas and language features of challenging poems confidently and with good understanding. Pupils wrote regularly for a variety of purposes and presented their work well at all stages. Their research-based writing was well structured and interesting to read. Pupils at the early stages shared their stories well with older pupils by reading them aloud or compiling them in ‘big books’ for the class library. At P7, pupils wrote very moving poetry and diary entries on a World War II theme.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. It had decreased in the last three years. Most pupils attained appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. At the early stages, almost all were making steady progress in working with numbers. Progress slowed as pupils progressed through the school, with some weaknesses evident in attainment by P7. At the middle stages, pupils showed effective skills in carrying out surveys and had good experience of using computers to process and present data. Most pupils were good at carrying out written and mental calculations. They coped well with the majority of tasks involving measurements of area, length, time, volume and weight. At the upper stages, too many pupils lacked understanding of fractions and decimals. They had learned to use computers to handle data, but had not maintained and applied this learning enough. At these stages, some pupils lacked care in reading graph scales. In problem-solving and enquiry, the majority of pupils could solve problems systematically.

5. How well are pupils’ learning needs met?

The school’s arrangements for meeting pupils’ learning needs were adequate. On the whole, teachers used their knowledge of pupils well to focus support on individuals and groups. They advised pupils effectively on planning and organising their work, and had made a good start to helping pupils to set their own learning targets. Well-planned paired and group activities enabled pupils to support one another. In English language, teachers usually matched tasks and resources effectively to pupils’ differing learning needs. Their

approaches were less consistent in other areas of the curriculum. In around a third of lessons, pupils' differing needs were not met sufficiently. Sometimes teachers relied on worksheets which did not challenge higher-attaining pupils enough. In mathematics, weaknesses in pupils' understanding had not always been sufficiently identified and addressed. Specialist learning support teachers provided a wide and sensitive range of assistance for pupils with additional support needs. Most often, pupils attended the well-organised support for learning base. Pupils would benefit from more in-class learning support alongside their peers. Support assistants worked very well with teachers and pupils and provided valuable assistance in lessons. Visiting staff helped pupils with specific additional needs, including English as an additional language and visual impairment, to make very good progress.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Staff were highly committed to pupils' care and welfare and very sensitive to their needs. The school had clear and appropriate arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, the prevention of bullying and early morning attendance checks. Pupils felt safe and well cared for at school. The school's approaches to pupils' personal and social education included an appropriate emphasis on personal relationships and avoiding alcohol and substance misuse. The school strongly encouraged healthy lifestyles in partnership with its eating for health assistant, catering staff and the Active Schools Coordinator. It offered pupils healthy eating options and gave high priority to physical activities at playtimes and in planned after-school activities. The school had clear and effective arrangements for pupils entering P1 and for pupils in P7 transferring to local secondary schools.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation was adequate. The listed building was well maintained and had appropriate security arrangements. The well-used library and ICT suite provided effective environments for learning. The large playground included a popular adventure play area. Although classrooms were bright and attractive, some were small and restricted pupils' movement. Nearly all lacked sinks for practical activities. The attractive hall and well-equipped gymnasium had limitations as teaching areas as they served as through-routes for pupils and staff. Access for disabled users was limited to the ground floor.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school was very welcoming. Most pupils behaved well and were polite, friendly and helpful. The pupil council represented their views effectively. A minority of boys showed very rough and physical behaviour in the playground, and a few had been verbally abusive to staff. The school's clear policy on behaviour was not always applied consistently by all staff. Relationships amongst staff were mostly positive. Pupils had appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Staff used praise and rewards successfully to encourage pupils, and they valued and celebrated pupils' achievements. They did not consistently challenge high-attaining pupils. In most respects, the school promoted equality and fairness very well. The teacher of bi-lingual pupils and school chaplains made important contributions to pupils' understanding of other religions and cultures. Staff implemented the school's policy on race equality effectively. Pupils with additional support needs, including behavioural difficulties, were not always effectively integrated and supported alongside their peers.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Partnership with parents and the community was very good overall. The School Board and PTA were active and supportive. The headteacher gave high priority to communicating regularly with parents and to involving them in the work of the school. New and effective arrangements to extend parents' evenings had provided parents with a clearer view of their children's learning experiences at school. Parents and children responded very positively to an induction event for new admissions to P1. Reports to parents provided wide-ranging information about pupils' achievement across the curriculum. Parents lacked appropriate information about the school's priorities for improvement. The school had strong links with the community, including local churches. Pupils benefited from productive links with a range of external support services and with other local schools. Staff used a wide variety of visits and visitors to the school to enrich pupils' learning.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Staff at Ancrum Road Primary School provided a good overall standard of education for pupils. They provided a high level of pastoral care for pupils and adequately met their learning needs. Most areas of the curriculum were well developed. Teaching was good overall but varied too widely in quality. In lessons, pupils were mostly well behaved, motivated and hardworking. They achieved good standards in English language although their progress in mathematics was less consistent. The school strongly promoted pupils' broader achievements outwith the classroom. It was striving effectively to provide parents with greater insight into their children's learning experiences at school.

The headteacher was enthusiastic, committed to pupils' welfare, and well regarded by parents. She engaged positively with staff and encouraged their professional development. She had responded appropriately to the views of staff, pupils and parents by improving communication in the school and initiating a review of the school's ethos. However, the headteacher had not yet won the confidence of all staff. She had not conveyed to staff a clearly focused view of what required to be done to take the school forward. Leadership, both by the headteacher and across the school as a whole, was adequate. The headteacher had worked hard to develop the capacity and teamwork of the senior management team. Senior managers were becoming more experienced and increasingly effective. The two deputy headteachers contributed significantly to the ethos of the school. They led school improvement projects effectively, for example in the areas of literacy and health promotion. Their remits did not include sufficient responsibilities which spanned all stages P1 to P7. Senior managers overall were not sufficiently proactive in ensuring high standards of learning and teaching. Unpromoted teachers improved the school by serving on working groups, running clubs for pupils and mentoring less experienced colleagues. One managed the ICT programme very effectively. Teachers had collaborated well to effect improvements in English language. However, teamwork was restricted and tensions arose because a few teachers were reluctant to give full support to school improvement plans. Approaches to self-evaluation were weak, but improving. Staff evaluated and improved curricular programmes effectively, but were less reflective about learning and teaching. Senior managers evaluated teachers' plans systematically and discussed the needs of individual pupils with their teachers. They had just begun to monitor the quality of learning and teaching and pupils' attainment. The school's capacity for improvement was not yet fully developed.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve attainment, the meeting of pupils' learning needs, leadership, teamwork and self-evaluation. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve attainment in mathematics;
- ensure that tasks set for pupils across the curriculum are matched more consistently to their prior attainment and learning needs;
- ensure more focused leadership, giving greater emphasis to evaluating and improving standards of learning and teaching; and
- improve teamwork and cooperation by all staff in improving the school.

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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Tom Straiton
HM Inspector

25 September 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate

How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	adequate
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	adequate
Leadership across the school	adequate
Self-evaluation	weak

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

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

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a good reputation in the local community. • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • Their children enjoyed school, were treated fairly, and found school work stimulating and challenging. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About a quarter of parents wanted more information about the school's priorities for improving pupils' education.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could. • Teachers told them how they were getting on with their work, and how their learning could be improved. • Teachers told them when they had done something well. • The school helped them to stay safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just under half felt that pupils could be better behaved. • About a quarter did not think that all pupils were treated fairly.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They liked working in the school. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • Staff were aware of the school's procedures for child protection. • Communication amongst staff was effective. • Pupils' success was regularly celebrated. • Staff worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly half of staff wanted indiscipline to be dealt with more effectively, and standards set for pupils' behaviour to be upheld more consistently. • About a third of staff felt that leadership of the school could be improved, and that senior managers could operate more effectively as a team.

How can you contact us?

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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, 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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