

**Dens Road Primary School
Dundee City Council
22 March 2005**

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1. Background

Dens Road Primary School was inspected in December 2004 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 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 a group of parents. There was no School Board or parent teacher association (PTA). The school was being led by an acting headteacher who had been in post since August 2004.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school serves an area near the centre of Dundee City. At the time of the inspection the roll was 329, including 48 in the nursery class. Twenty four pupils spoke English as an additional language to their family language. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below 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.

- Positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents.
- The broad range of extra-curricular activities which were having a significant impact on children's skills in a number of aspects of their learning.
- Pupils' awareness and knowledge of healthy lifestyles.
- Very good support for pupils who were experiencing difficulties in their learning.
- The leadership of the acting headteacher and depute headteacher.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, 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.

Interviews and surveys indicated that parents and carers, pupils and staff were positive about most aspects of the school. Parents reported that their children were well cared for and enjoyed being at school. They commented that there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. A few wanted to know more about their children's strengths and weaknesses and the standards of work expected from pupils. A quarter of those parents who responded to the survey wanted a clearer idea of the school's priorities for improving pupils' education. Pupils were positive about almost all aspects of the school. They liked school meals and the healthy eating tuckshop. Pupils felt teachers told them when they did something well and expected them to work as hard as they could. Many wanted the behaviour of some pupils to improve. Almost all staff reported that the school was well led and that pupils' success was celebrated regularly. They all felt that they worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community. A few wanted better communication between senior managers and staff. Support staff felt that teachers showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was good and provided pupils with broad and balanced experiences. Staff made effective use of education authority advice on the curriculum to provide progress and continuity in pupils' learning. The health programme was a particular strength and was having a positive impact on pupils' knowledge about active lifestyles and healthy eating. Pupils had access to a range of activities within the curriculum which successfully promoted their personal and social development. In some classes, the information and communications technology (ICT) programme was having a positive impact on pupils' skills. Overall, however, ICT was not sufficiently used to enhance pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics. Staff did not provide enough planned experiences for pupils to develop their skills in enterprise. An alternative curriculum, involving a range of practical experiences, had recently been put in place to support those pupils who required at times, different learning experiences. This was beginning to increase the inclusion of these pupils in other curricular areas and school activities. Interactions between teachers and pupils were positive. The overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers were working hard to improve their approaches to teaching writing. They made good use of praise to motivate pupils. Most teachers encouraged pupils to contribute to lessons and valued their contributions to class discussions. They did not always use questioning effectively to extend and support pupils' learning. Most teachers shared the purpose of lessons well, explained ideas clearly and provided clear instructions. They did not however involve pupils enough in discussions of their strengths and development needs. Homework was used effectively to support pupils' learning.

Most pupils throughout the school were keen to learn, hard working and concentrated well. They were developing confidence when reflecting on their own learning and that of others. In the early stages, pupils engaged enthusiastically in interesting activities such as practical science or making stories on the computer and were developing a broad range of skills. They were benefiting from varied and appropriate opportunities to learn through play. Throughout the school, pupils were learning to think for themselves and discuss their ideas with others, for example, in English language, health, drugs awareness and drama. In a few classes, pupils worked well together in groups and in pairs. Overall, however, there were not enough planned opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in group working. The pace of learning was good but at a few stages it was not brisk enough to enable more able pupils to achieve appropriate levels of attainment. Most pupils throughout the school worked well without close supervision. They enjoyed and responded well to challenges set for them. Pupils did not consistently take enough responsibility for their learning or have sufficient opportunities to develop skills to learn independently.

At all stages, pupils were developing a good knowledge and understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles. Throughout the school, pupils energetically participated in a range of initiatives which actively promoted their fitness and well-being. Involvement in chess, recorder, first aid and homework clubs increased pupils' enjoyment and intellectual stimulation. Pupils expressed themselves creatively through art and design. They made good use of people and places within the local environment to enhance the quality of their experiences in a number of areas, for example physical education and citizenship. They regularly participated, and achieved success, in a range of sporting activities, including football, rugby and netball. Elected representatives from P4 to P7 made positive contributions to the life of the school through the work of the pupil council. They consulted well with pupils from all classes. Pupils from P5/P6, with support from staff, ran a healthy eating tuck shop to encourage healthy snacks. Such activities encouraged pupils to be aware of their responsibilities and develop their skills as citizens. Pupils had been developing some good enterprise skills, for example through raising funds for charity and for the school.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was fair. While standards had improved in reading in recent years, standards in writing had significantly declined. Overall, only a majority of pupils achieved national levels of attainment in reading and writing. A number in the early stages achieved these levels early, but progress was not consistently maintained at the middle and upper stages. Pupils who experienced difficulties in reading and writing were making appropriate progress, especially those for whom English was an additional language. The school did not have a reliable approach to assessing pupils' listening and talking skills. On the evidence available, a majority of pupils were attaining appropriate levels of attainment in these areas. Pupils listened and responded appropriately to information and instructions. They prepared and gave class talks, for example on books they had read. Most expressed themselves clearly. Their skills in listening and talking in groups were less well developed. At the early stages, pupils were developing a good awareness and understanding of print and by P3 were reading with confidence. They approached writing confidently. At P4 to P7, pupils read effectively for information. However, at the upper stages, they lacked confidence in collating and selecting information from more than one source. Most understood the meaning and main

messages contained in a range of texts and had opportunities to read for pleasure. Pupils wrote for a variety of purposes. However, some did not write at sufficient length or with appropriate attention to detail. Standards of presentation of work were too variable.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics had steadily improved in recent years. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Pupils who had not attained these levels were making good progress. Across the school, pupils' numeracy skills were developing well. They showed confidence and accuracy with mental calculations. At P2, pupils had good skills in handling money and at P5, pupils were developing good skills in calculating time. By P6 and P7 pupils showed a very good understanding of shape, position and movement. P6 pupils were able to identify, and work with, angles very effectively. At almost all stages pupils were developing a good awareness of strategies they might use to solve problems. Older pupils were able to interpret information from various types of graphs. However pupils' ability to use ICT to handle information was less well developed.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Staff provided good levels of support for pupils' care and welfare. They knew pupils well and were sensitive to their needs. Staff successfully promoted very good relationships and positive behaviour. They had developed and implemented good procedures to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents where pupils' health might be at risk. As a result, almost all pupils enjoyed school and felt safe. Staff worked hard to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence and were being successful. The school made very good provision for health education, including aspects of personal safety, education about drugs and personal relationships. Staff worked hard to promote healthy eating habits. They encouraged children to eat a healthier diet and took part in an authority 'fit for life' scheme. Younger children regularly enjoyed eating fruit. Throughout the school, pupils engaged in short but effective active sessions to help them concentrate and encourage fitness. Older pupils effectively assisted younger pupils at mealtimes. Pupils' safety was put at risk in the playground as an open entrance allowed them to run straight out onto a busy road.

Arrangements to support pupils' learning were good overall. Teachers gave helpful support to all pupils. In most lessons, teachers met pupils' needs very well. The inclusion of pupils with specific additional support needs was effective. All staff were sensitive to their broad range of needs and worked well together to meet these. Staff had started to effectively address the needs for those pupils for whom 'mainstream education' was a challenge through providing them with alternative curricular activities. Throughout the school, staff utilised a good range of resources to support and challenge pupils. However, arrangements for grouping pupils for English language and mathematics did not always ensure that the learning needs of all pupils were fully met. There was insufficient challenge for some groups of pupils. Well planned individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were provided for pupils with additional support needs. Pupils and parents were effectively involved in setting appropriate learning targets. The education authority and school co-operated well in recording and reviewing pupils' special educational needs. Procedures for maintaining and reviewing

Records of Needs were well established. Pupils were well supported as they moved from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school. Staff worked well with a range of outside agencies, including bilingual support, to assist pupils and meet their needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The accommodation and facilities were of good quality and were well maintained. The school environment was attractive and stimulating. Staff made effective use of all available space. The dining room was spacious, colourful and attractive. Several displays and healthy eating posters were attractively displayed on the walls. Pupils had good access to drinking water and some healthy food options. A rota system ensured that dining arrangements ran smoothly. Pupils had good access to supervised playground areas and some play equipment. However, the side entrance gate, off of the playground, was often left open. School grounds were sometimes used as a thoroughfare by members of the public. A risk assessment should be undertaken on these aspects to assure pupils' safety.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Relationships were very good. Pupils had positive attitudes and almost all were well behaved. Almost all teachers had good expectations of pupils' levels of behaviour, broader aspects of achievement and attendance. However, teachers needed to ensure that their expectations of pupils' attainment were consistently high. Throughout the school, pupils were valued equally and treated fairly. Pupils who received additional support were included in all school activities. Staff encouraged pupils to develop positive attitudes, tolerance and mutual respect for cultural differences. They regularly celebrated pupils' achievements and successes through, for example, achievement boards, star pupil and star writer award systems. School assemblies provided regular opportunities for religious observance and the celebration of pupils' successes.
Partnership with parents and the community	While there was no School Board or PTA, staff had established some good links with parents. Parents were kept well informed through a good range of written information, parents' evenings, open afternoons and helpful reports on their children's progress. They received some relevant information on school meals, menus and health education topics, including nutrition. However, there were no formal

Aspect	Comment
	mechanisms to consult with parents on sensitive issues such as health. Staff, parents and pupils worked well together. They had successfully organised fund raising activities to raise money for local and international charities. The school had effective links with the local community, other organisations and the local secondary school. Joint initiatives with community workers to support parents were impacting positively on pupils' learning. Parents accessed translators and attended weekly classes within the school to help them learn to speak English more fluently.

7. Improving the school

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

The acting headteacher and staff were effective in providing pupils with a caring, inclusive and supportive learning environment. Pupils had access to a range of activities which successfully promoted their personal and social development. The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. There was considerable scope to improve pupils' attainment, particularly in English language, by providing them with greater challenge and improving the pace of lessons.

The acting headteacher was well respected by staff and pupils. In his short time in post, he had made good progress in taking forward various initiatives which had required attention. He was developing ways to support staff improve the school's approaches to teaching writing. He had ensured that an alternative curriculum for particular pupils supported them well in school. The acting headteacher was providing the school with good leadership and in some aspects this was very good. He had a clear vision for the school, was very committed to the well-being of pupils and was establishing a positive, inclusive atmosphere for learning and achievement. The acting headteacher was developing a good partnership with parents and had been successful in ensuring that all staff were part of a team. The depute headteacher provided good support for the acting headteacher. Their individual strengths complemented one another and together, they formed an effective senior management team. They were well regarded by others and supported staff well. Their leadership was having a positive impact on pupils' experiences. Their remits required to be updated to reflect their responsibilities for school improvement.

The acting headteacher was making good progress in introducing and implementing formalised arrangements for self-evaluation to monitor the quality of pupils' experiences. Together with the depute headteacher, he was establishing effective systems for supporting class teachers and in tracking pupils' progress. Arrangements were underway to use this information more effectively to set appropriate learning targets, monitor pupils' progress and support their future levels of attainment. Senior managers had started to implement a programme to regularly review the school's work, including classroom practice and had formally fed back to staff. Priorities identified in

the school development plan were having a significant impact particularly in mathematics and health promotion.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve attainment and aspects of learning and teaching. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve attainment in English language and ensure that ICT is used more effectively to enhance pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics;
- increase the pace in pupils' learning and provide them with more opportunities to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning;
- with the full involvement of staff, extend existing arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching;
- involve parents more in the life of the school; and
- address the health and safety issues as 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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will ask the education authority for an interim report on progress within one year, and a further report within two years of publication of this report. Parents and carers will be informed on the extent of improvements being achieved.

Moira Cummings
HM Inspector

22 March 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Accommodation and facilities
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Partnership with parents and the community
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be fair

- Pupils' attainment in English language

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.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • Their children enjoyed being in school. • School buildings were kept in good order and staff made them feel welcome. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents wanted to know more about their children’s strengths and weaknesses and the standards expected from pupils. • A quarter of parents who responded wanted to know more about the school’s priorities for improving the education of pupils. • A few parents wanted to know more about how to help their children with homework.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils enjoyed being at school. • Most pupils felt that they had the right amount of homework and teachers checked it. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could and told them when they had done something well. • The school helped to keep them safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just under half wanted the school to improve the behaviour of other pupils. • A few wanted the school to be better at sorting things out when they were upset. • A few wanted teachers to listen more to them.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community. • Pupils were enthusiastic about learning. • Almost all felt that the school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few staff wanted to see communication between senior managers and staff improve. • A fifth of the teaching staff wanted standards set for pupils’ behaviour to be consistently upheld in the school. • A few of the teaching staff wanted more discussion on school priorities.

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.

If you wish to comment about primary inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2nd Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600265 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk

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