

**Fintry Primary School
Dundee City Council
1 May 2007**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	3
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Leading and improving the school	5
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	8
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	9
How can you contact us?	10

1. Background

Fintry Primary School was inspected in January 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 representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹. There was no School Board.

The school serves the area of Fintry, in the north of Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 363, including 24 pupils in the language unit. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Provision in the school's language unit, which catered for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The successful commitment of staff to the care and welfare of pupils.
- Leadership of the headteacher in developing a positive ethos in the school and nurturing effective teamwork.

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, pupils and staff were positive about almost all aspects of the school. Parents felt that staff made them feel welcome in the school and that all staff showed genuine concern for their children. They thought that the headteacher provided strong leadership and they were pleased with the recent improvements they had seen in the school. A majority of parents stated that the accommodation was in a poor state of repair and were concerned about the timescale for the proposed move to a new

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

building. Pupils also expressed concern regarding the condition of the school building. They enjoyed being at school but a significant minority felt that pupils were not always dealt with fairly. A few wanted more regular homework and more challenging work in class. All staff enjoyed working in the school and thought that the school was well led by the headteacher and deputies.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum which helped them to develop a range of effective skills. Additional time given to English language and mathematics had been used most recently with the intention of raising pupils' attainment. Staff were working to improve aspects of the curriculum, particularly in reading, writing and personal and social education, to improve pupils' knowledge, understanding and development of skills. Staff did not integrate information and communications technology (ICT) sufficiently into the curriculum. The overall quality of teaching was good. Interactions between teachers and pupils were positive. In most classes, teachers questioned pupils effectively to challenge and extend their learning. They listened to pupils' responses and actively promoted and valued their contributions to class lessons and discussions. They shared the purpose of lessons, explained ideas well and provided clear instructions. However, this good practice was not consistent throughout the school.

Most pupils were well behaved, conscientious and remained on tasks set for them. However, they were too often asked to undertake work which did not require them to think enough about their learning, particularly in the middle stages, where activities were not sufficiently challenging or stimulating. In too many English language and mathematics lessons, pupils were passive learners and did not have enough opportunity for active learning or collaborative work. Across the school the pace of learning was frequently too slow. Pupils spent considerable time completing low level, undemanding tasks and were often unclear about what to do next.

The school took good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Pupils had worked with staff and parents to raise funds for charitable organisations, including a very successful event for the British Heart Foundation. Enterprise activities at each stage were beginning to help pupils develop skills in teamwork. Older pupils helped look after younger pupils and played their part as monitors conscientiously. Pupils in P5 had designed and made stained glass panels with the help of a specialist artist, highlighting school values including trust and caring for others. The school held a successful end of term assembly where each pupil was rewarded for their personal achievement in a range of areas. Staff encouraged pupils to become aware of the need for healthy eating and exercise through an effective programme and related activities. There was a wide range of well-attended out of school activities organised and led by staff.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was weak. Over the last three years, standards of attainment in reading and writing had fluctuated. More recently,

there had been a notable improvement. At the early stages, most pupils reached appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing earlier than might normally be expected. However, this good early progress was not sustained and by P7 only a majority of pupils achieved expected levels. Pupils listened to and responded well to their peers and to adults but were not sufficiently skilled in group discussion. Most read fluently and talked enthusiastically about books they had read. By P7, the majority of pupils read regularly for their own enjoyment. However, they were unable to comment with confidence on how writers achieved their effects. Pupils' attainment in writing was weak. In the middle and upper stages, pupils were not given sufficient opportunities to write at length. Standards in spelling, handwriting and presentation of written work were inconsistent.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was weak. Levels of attainment had shown some improvement from a very low level two years ago. At the early stages, almost all pupils reached appropriate national levels of attainment. At P4 to P7 only a majority were achieving these levels. For too many pupils, including pupils with additional support needs, the pace of progress was slow. Most pupils could interpret bar graphs and charts but pupils needed more regular opportunities to gather and present information graphically and use computers to organise and display information. Most pupils were able to give accurate change in activities involving money. However, at the upper stages, a majority were not yet fully confident in working with fractions, decimals and percentages. Pupils had a basic knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes, but a significant minority did not have a firm understanding of the properties of shapes. Throughout the school, a positive start had been made to developing pupils' problem-solving and enquiry skills. However, pupils needed to develop their skills further in selecting, discussing and applying a range of problem-solving strategies and setting down solutions in a clear and logical fashion.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

There were a number of important weaknesses in the arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs. Staff did not make effective use of assessment information to identify and plan next steps in pupils' learning. In a number of classes there was an over-reliance on learning materials that were not sufficiently challenging and did not take full account of the range of pupils' needs. Pupils working with support for learning staff were not making sufficient progress in areas identified as weaknesses. The school had introduced individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for a small number of pupils with additional support needs. The IEPs contained appropriate learning targets and these were shared with parents. The targets were not used sufficiently by class teachers. Learning assistants had good relationships with the pupils and provided valuable support during lessons. The school had effective arrangements to support pupils at points of transfer from the nursery class into P1. Strong links with Braeview Academy included good opportunities for staff from the secondary school to work with P7 pupils. For example, pupils studied the development of books on an extended project working with secondary school staff.

Staff in the language unit provided a high standard of care and support for pupils with autism spectrum disorders and other speech, language or communication difficulties.

The caring and committed deputy headteacher and staff took full account of the social, emotional, physical and educational needs of the pupils. Pupils were making very good progress and staff ensured that the achievement of all pupils in the unit was recognised and celebrated. They provided pupils with well-judged support in the unit classes and across the school. They ensured that pupils were involved in the wider work of the school including, for example, representation on the school's pupil council. Staff made effective use of the wider community to further progress pupils' learning. Support staff and teachers worked well as a team to enable pupils to develop socially and to become more independent.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school's arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils were good. Staff were sensitive to the emotional, physical and social needs of individual pupils. The school had clear procedures in place to deal with child protection issues and these were clearly understood and applied by staff. Pupils could describe the school's procedures for dealing with instances of bullying and knew what to do if they had any concerns. Pupils at P4 had developed an anti-bullying leaflet to help other pupils. The school was committed to encouraging pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle. Staff had developed effective arrangements to monitor and improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils.
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of the accommodation was weak. Space inside the building was restricted and some teaching areas were cramped. Staff made effective use of display to create a bright and interesting environment for pupils. However, the poor quality and appearance of the building detracted from the positive ethos that staff were seeking to establish within the school. There were some important weaknesses relating to health and safety. The playground was utilised as a car park and pupils required careful supervision when moving between one of the mobile classrooms to the main building. The windows were in poor condition and there were repairs required to the roof to prevent leaks into the classrooms and corridor areas. The toilet areas were in a poor state of repair and there were several areas of the school requiring redecoration. Arrangements for access and security were appropriate.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The headteacher and staff had created a welcoming, caring and supportive climate for learning. Staff and pupils identified with the school and were proud to be associated with it. Most pupils were polite, well behaved, and cooperative with teachers and with each other. However, a minority lacked appropriate motivation and, at times, their behaviour affected relationships. Staff promoted achievement through the regular use of praise and incentives for good work. Expectations of pupils' work and attainment were not consistently high. Weekly school assemblies provided good opportunities for religious observance, encouraging positive behaviour and highlighting pupils' efforts and achievements. While pupils had some understanding of religious diversity, the school had not yet developed its approaches to promoting race equality and to helping pupils recognise and tackle discrimination.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school's links with parents, the parent-teacher association and the community were good. Overall, parents were happy with the school. "Meet the Teacher" meetings and achievement assemblies were recent developments which parents found to be very helpful and informative. The headteacher had taken positive steps to improve communication. She had issued regular newsletters and had begun to give parents more detailed information about the curriculum. Written reports to parents were helpful but did not always give parents sufficient information about what pupils needed to do to improve their work. Parents had been fully informed about the health education programme for teaching pupils about personal relationships. The school had extended the wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs to include a Spanish language class, which parents and pupils attended together. Staff, pupils and parents worked closely with the community in a number of activities. For example, the headteacher chaired a community group planning for the development of the new school building.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

In the two years prior to the inspection, the school had experienced significant staffing difficulties. This had adversely affected relationships within the school, staff morale and the partnership between parents and the school. The headteacher and staff had

worked well together to improve the climate within the school and create effective relationships and an appropriate context for learning. As a consequence of this work, the curriculum had been developed and pupils' attainment had shown signs of recent improvement. The school was well placed to improve but there was a need for staff to address weaknesses in pupils' learning experiences and in the quality of attainment.

The headteacher provided good leadership. She was highly committed to the school and the local community and had successfully led staff and pupils during a difficult period. She had developed a supportive climate and had given a clear lead in taking forward appropriate priorities for improvement. Her open and consultative management style had gained her the loyalty and respect of staff and parents. She consulted with staff and parents on the school's priorities, and encouraged staff involvement in curriculum development tasks. The headteacher was supported well by a team of three depute headteachers. They carried out their remits effectively, had made improvements to the curriculum and had led initiatives with considerable professional expertise. The headteacher and staff had developed good procedures for monitoring the work of the school, using national performance indicators. They tracked pupils' attainment, regularly evaluated and discussed the quality of learning and teaching and consulted with parents and pupils about initiatives. They were beginning to monitor more systematically the rate of pupils' progress towards learning targets.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve pupils' learning and achievement. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to raise pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics;
- ensure consistency across the school in the pace and challenge of lessons and in meeting pupils' needs;
- improve pupils' learning experiences by providing more opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, be active in their learning and have greater responsibility for their own learning;
- further develop arrangements for support for learning to ensure a clearer focus on raising the achievement of individual pupils; and
- address the accommodation 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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Peter Carpenter
HM Inspector

1 May 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	weak
Pupils' attainment in English language	weak
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	weak

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

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

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

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"> • Dealt with all concerns raised. • Made them feel welcome. • Showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. • Made school enjoyable for their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how they can help with homework. • Share information about the school's priorities for improvement. • Improve the accommodation.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers checked their homework regularly. • Staff expected all pupils to work hard. • Made school an enjoyable experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with bullying incidents more effectively. • Ensure that all pupils are dealt with fairly.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all staff felt that the school was well led. • Knew how to protect children. • Set high standards for pupils' attainment. • Created a positive, happy working environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with indiscipline more effectively. • Manage behaviour more consistently.

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, 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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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: www.spsso.org.uk.

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