

**Gowriehill Primary School
Dundee City Council
19 December 2006**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	2
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	4
6. How good is the environment for learning?	5
7. Leading and improving the school	6
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	9
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	10
How can you contact us?	11

1. Background

Gowriehill Primary School was inspected in September 2006 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 School Board, members of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

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 the Gowriehill area of Dundee. In addition, there are two resourced location classes for pupils with a range of additional support needs. At the time of the inspection the roll was 263. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

In recent years, the school had experienced significant changes to management and teaching staff following the secondment of the permanent headteacher, extended staff absences and the secondment of teachers to the Educational Development Service. A new headteacher had now been appointed. She had taken up the permanent post in August 2006 following a five month period as acting headteacher.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' participation and involvement in a wide range of out of school clubs and activities.
- Effective transition arrangements for pupils transferring from P7 to S1 to ensure continuity in their learning.
- The initial impact of the new headteacher in identifying appropriate strengths and areas for development.

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

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

The small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire were generally satisfied with almost all aspects of the school's work. They thought that children enjoyed being at school and found school work challenging and stimulating. Most felt that staff treated children fairly and showed concern for their care and welfare. They agreed that the school had a good reputation in the community. A significant number of parents and staff had expressed concerns about the frequent changes to the management of the school following the secondment of the previous headteacher. Pupils enjoyed being at school and felt that they got on well with each other. Almost all pupils agreed that teachers explained things clearly and helped them with difficulties. They felt safe and well looked after in school. Staff were very satisfied with almost all aspects of school life. They enjoyed working in the school and felt that they worked well as a team. All staff stated that the new headteacher had made a positive start to improving the school since taking up post.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The structure and balance of the curriculum was adequate but improving. The visiting specialist teachers for music and physical education provided a very good level of support for teachers and pupils. The teachers who delivered the programmes for science and health education were developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of each subject using a range of relevant and practical learning activities. Staff had recently introduced a range of new resources and programmes, including a new reading scheme and a whole school programme to promote personal and social development. Teachers did not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to take part in enterprise activities or develop their understanding of the world of work. The quality of the curriculum for pupils in the resourced location classes was variable and did not always meet the specific needs of individual pupils. The overall quality of teaching was adequate. Across the school, there were examples of purposeful and well-planned teaching but the quality of teaching was not consistent from class to class. Most teachers were developing the use of assessment strategies and had started to share learning intentions and success criteria with pupils at the start of lessons. However, the lack of accurate assessment information made it very difficult for teachers to identify and plan the next steps in pupils' learning, particularly at the start of the new school year. The most effective teachers used a variety of relevant teaching approaches to motivate pupils and involve them actively in their learning. However, the lack of consistency in the quality of teachers' classroom management and organisation led to a lack of continuity in pupils' progress. Teachers had limited resources to enable them to provide high quality experiences for pupils to learn through play from P1 to P3. Across the school, teachers made good use of the computer suite to develop pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) but pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to apply and develop their skills in the classroom situation. The quality of teaching in the resourced location classrooms and the choice of tasks and activities did not take sufficient account of pupils' individual learning needs. The quality of homework activities was variable and lacked challenge in some classes.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was weak. There were examples of effective learning in a number of classes but in a few classes, the interaction between teachers and pupils was not of a sufficiently high standard and this had a negative impact on the quality of learning. In these classes, a number of pupils were not well-motivated learners and their skills in working together and learning from each other were limited. They required close supervision and their inappropriate behaviour regularly disrupted the quality of learning for other pupils in the class. Across the school, the organisation of attainment groups, the pace of learning and choice of activities in each curriculum area did not always take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning experiences or learning needs. The quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of written work were not of a sufficiently high standard.

The headteacher had worked closely with staff to increase the sense of community within the school to recognise and develop pupils' wider achievements. In recent months, staff had implemented new approaches to develop pupils' personal and social skills and had increased the focus on the development of citizenship skills. House captains and vice-captains had good opportunities to make decisions about the school and the pupil council was about to be reintroduced. Senior pupils had practical opportunities to become actively involved in the life of the school by helping out as playground monitors and junior road safety officers. Pupils were learning about issues such as personal safety, substance abuse, the importance of healthy eating and the need for a healthy lifestyle. Across the school, pupils took part in a wide range of supported study events and after-school activities. Most pupils in P7 took part in the annual residential experience to develop their self-confidence and citizenship skills.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was weak. In the previous year, there had been a decline in the number of pupils reaching appropriate national levels, particularly in writing. Across the school, the majority of pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in reading but only half of the pupils were attaining the appropriate level in writing. Pupils' progress in coursework was not good enough and a significant number of pupils across the school were capable of achieving higher standards. Pupils who experienced difficulties with aspects of reading and writing had started to receive an increased level of support following the appointment of a learning support teacher. Pupils talked confidently and most listened attentively to instructions and explanations. However, their talking and listening skills were not consistently well developed in all classes. Across the school, pupils' reading skills were improving although by P7, very few pupils read widely for pleasure outwith school. The quality of pupils' writing was not of a high enough standard. The majority of pupils did not produce written work of an extended length. They did not have a good understanding of grammatical terms or punctuation.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was weak. Levels of attainment over the last three years had remained stable. Most pupils from P1 to P5 but only the majority from P6 to P7 were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment. Pupils who were experiencing difficulties with aspects of mathematics were well supported in their learning and were making steady progress. Pupils generally performed well in their coursework but the level of challenge was limited and a significant number of pupils were capable of achieving higher standards. Pupils at all stages were confident in handling

information but they had too few opportunities to use computers to collate and display information. Most pupils were developing good strategies for mental calculation and could give answers quickly and accurately. They successfully tackled most tasks involving number and money. Older pupils had a good knowledge of angles but were not confident in working with fractions and decimals. Throughout the school, pupils had a good knowledge and understanding of the properties of shapes. They did not have a good knowledge of problem-solving strategies.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Across the school, pupils' learning needs were not being met effectively. The lack of accurate assessment information and pupil records made it very difficult for teachers to provide appropriate learning activities to build on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills. In a number of lessons, pupils were not challenged sufficiently and were not making enough progress in their learning. The new headteacher had introduced a system to monitor and track pupils' progress in English language and mathematics and teachers were beginning to make use of the system in all classes. Classroom assistants carried out a wide range of activities and provided good support to teachers and pupils. The roles of the two learning support teachers were being reviewed. They worked closely with teachers and provided a good level of support for pupils who experienced difficulties with aspects of their learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school's systems to identify and support pupils with additional support needs lacked rigour and required to be developed further. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils with additional support needs had not been finalised at the time of the inspection. The school had not involved parents sufficiently in preparing and reviewing IEPs for pupils in the resourced location classes or mainstream classes. The school had good arrangements in place to support pupils at points of transfer from nursery into P1. There were very good arrangements to ensure a smooth transition for pupils moving from P7 into secondary school.

The resourced location classes provided support for pupils with a wide range of additional support needs. Placement in the resource was by education authority referral. Teachers and support staff were very committed and sensitive to the social, emotional and educational needs of the pupils. They provided pupils with support in their base class and in mainstream classes when required. At the upper stages, pupils were hardworking and motivated to learn. They were enthusiastic and cooperated well with each other, for example during structured play and in music and movement. Overall, pupils accessed a broad and relevant curriculum. However, some pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to learn through practical activities. At the early stages, the supply teacher and classroom assistant demonstrated considerable skill in managing the challenging behaviour displayed by some pupils. They had made some changes to the learning environment and were very aware of the need to provide safe, meaningful activities which would motivate the pupils. Pupils in the resourced location had a shorter school week than the rest of the school.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>The school's procedures to ensure the care, welfare and protection of pupils were good. Staff had a good working understanding of the school's clearly stated policies on child protection, substance abuse and the administration of medicine. New staff were about to undergo additional training on dealing with child protection issues. The school worked closely with a number of agencies to provide good support for pupils with additional support needs. Staff were generally sensitive to the emotional, physical and social needs of individuals. Pupils could describe the school's procedures for dealing with instances of bullying but did not feel that this was an issue within the school. Most pupils were confident that they could approach staff to discuss concerns and felt that the school would help them if they had a problem.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. The general fabric and condition of the building was good and there were high quality play areas. Staff and pupils had been involved in creating and maintaining attractive garden areas. The building had been adapted for users with restricted mobility. Pupils' toilet facilities were not of a high standard. Staff made good use of the gymnasium and the music room. The attractive school library and multi-purpose room was used regularly by staff and pupils. The quality of display in classes was variable. The school's security arrangements were appropriate.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Relationships between teachers and pupils were good overall. Most teachers and pupils worked well together and the quality of relationships in most classes was good. In most classes, staff treated pupils fairly and made effective use of praise to motivate and encourage them. However, a few teachers were not successful in dealing with inappropriate behaviour and the quality of their interaction with pupils was not good enough. Across the school, the overall standard of pupils' behaviour was good but there was a small number of pupils whose behaviour was not of an acceptable standard. Teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment were not high enough. The school had introduced a racial equality policy to increase pupils' understanding of racial issues and discrimination. The headteacher had reintroduced weekly assemblies to promote religious observance and highlight pupils' academic, sporting and social achievements.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had developed good links with parents, support agencies and the local community centre. There was scope to extend links within the local community. The local community centre offered pre-school and after-school care for pupils. The new headteacher had quickly established a good working relationship with parents and the School Board. She had introduced a number of initiatives such as information leaflets to give parents advice on ways of supporting children's learning at home. Staff, pupils and parents had raised money for a number of charities. Teachers held two meeting with parents each year to discuss children's progress. The quality and content of written reports to parents about their child's progress were variable. The school had yet to consult fully with parents on sensitive aspects of the health education programme.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Gowriehill Primary School did not offer pupils a consistently good standard of education. In recent years, changes at management level, staff absences and secondments had caused concern to teachers and parents. There were examples of effective learning and teaching but there was a lack of consistency in the quality of pupils' learning experiences. There was scope to increase pupils' attainment in mathematics and English language. The choice of tasks and activities during lessons

did not always present an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils and there was a lack of continuity and progression in pupils' learning. The standard of behaviour on the part of a small number of pupils and their negative attitude to learning had a disruptive effect on the quality of learning for other pupils in the class.

The newly appointed headteacher had taken up post in August 2006 following a five month period as acting headteacher. In her short time in post, she had earned the respect and confidence of staff, pupils and parents. She demonstrated a high level of commitment to improving the school. During her time in the school, the headteacher had worked well with staff and the education authority. She had identified the need to improve the quality of learning and teaching, raise the level of pupils' attainment, promote positive behaviour and ensure that the needs of all pupils were being met fully. The deputy headteacher had taken up post in January 2006. She worked closely with the headteacher and provided a very good level of support. The education authority had carried out an extended review of the school in March 2005 and had identified a significant number of action points. The headteacher had discussed the authority's action points and had involved staff in identifying improvement priorities but there had been little impact as yet. The deputy headteacher supported staff and had visited classes to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher and deputy headteacher had introduced new planning approaches and had started to discuss teachers' plans and look at samples of pupils' work. They recognised there was considerable scope for improvement but were committed to working with staff, pupils and parents to ensure that the school moved forward. The school and education authority will need to work in close partnership to ensure ongoing improvements in the school's work.

Main points for action

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- pupils' attainment;
- the quality of learning and teaching;
- the quality of learning experiences for pupils with additional support needs;
- the extent to which tasks and activities present sufficient challenge to meet the needs of all learners;
- the approaches to monitor, evaluate and improve the school's work; and
- the length of the school week for pupils in the resourced location classes.

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. They will make a further visit and will publish a further report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Michael Wood
HM Inspector

19 December 2006

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	adequate
The teaching process	adequate
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	good
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	weak
Equality and fairness	adequate
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership across the school	weak
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"> • They felt that their children enjoyed being at school. • They felt that there was mutual respect between pupils and teachers and that children were treated fairly. • Almost all parents felt that they were made to feel welcome in the school. • They considered that the school had a good reputation in the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the school's priorities for improvement. • Let them know about children's strengths and weaknesses. • Consult parents on decisions which affect children.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all enjoyed being at school. • Almost all felt that teachers explained things clearly, expected them to work hard and helped them when they were stuck. • Almost all felt safe and well looked after and that the school helped to keep them safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of some pupils.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

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