

**Our Lady's RC Primary School  
Dundee City Council  
1 May 2007**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Key strengths</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6. How good is the environment for learning?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7. Leading and improving the school</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Indicators of quality</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>How can you contact us?</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1. Background

Our Lady's RC 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 a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The school serves the Hilltown area of Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 121, including 20 children in a resourced location which catered for pupils with a wide range of needs and disabilities. At the time of the inspection a new headteacher had taken up post a few weeks earlier. 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.

- The quality of pastoral care provided for all pupils.
- The school's inclusive ethos.
- Well-maintained, high quality accommodation and resources.
- Committed, caring and enthusiastic staff.
- Partnership with parents, carers and external agencies.
- The early impact of the new headteacher on the school's identification of appropriate priorities for improvement.

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

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

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

Less than one fifth of the parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive about the work of the school. They felt their children enjoyed being at school and that teachers set high standards for attainment. All who responded to the questionnaire thought that the school was good at consulting them on decisions which affected their children. Almost all pupils enjoyed being at school. They felt that teachers were good at telling them how they were getting on with their work and letting them know how they could improve their learning. Around two thirds felt that the behaviour of other pupils was good. Teaching and auxiliary staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school.

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

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

The quality of the curriculum within the whole school was good overall. It was generally well balanced, although in the resourced location too much time was spent on numeracy and literacy work. The new headteacher had recognised the need to review the programme for English language to ensure that there was continuity and progression in the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers provided good opportunities for pupils from P1 to P4 to learn through play. All staff took good account of enterprise activities and citizenship to develop pupils' skills in these aspects. Visiting specialist teachers and visitors to the school helped pupils to develop a range of important skills through provision of activities in, for example, drama, fitness and dance. The overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers effectively explained to pupils what they were to learn and gave clear explanations and instructions. Teaching was frequently very interactive with teachers questioning effectively to engage pupils in discussion and to probe their understanding. Almost all staff made good use of praise to encourage pupils and to recognise good work. Homework was clearly linked to classwork and was promptly marked and returned to pupils with suggestions on how they could improve their performance. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used well to enhance teaching in all curricular areas.

Pupils' learning experiences were good overall. In almost all lessons, pupils concentrated well and enjoyed their learning. They were well behaved and showed respect for their teachers and for each other. Some pupils in the resourced location were capable of more challenging work. At P1 to P3, pupils were developing good early literacy and numeracy skills and worked well together in collaborative play. At P4 pupils showed enthusiasm for their lessons and worked well without direct teacher supervision. P5 pupils interacted well with pupils from the resourced location when considering the dangers arising from smoking. Pupils worked well in group writing activities at P6 and P7. On a few occasions, the pace of lessons was not always sufficiently brisk and follow-up activities were not consistently stimulating or challenging.

The school took good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Almost all pupils were making good progress in developing confidence and self-esteem. Pupils were successfully encouraged to contribute to the wider life of the school. The recently re-established pupil council had already had a positive impact. It had requested mirrors in the toilets and had been involved in selecting new kits for the school football team.

Pupils in the mainstream classes were effective in supporting pupils from the resourced location and took responsibility for acting as monitors in the dining hall, playground and around the school. Pupils had developed a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the school had achieved a Bronze Award as a Health Promoting School. Younger pupils received fresh fruit on a daily basis. Many pupils successfully benefited from taking part in a wide range of sporting activities including football, netball and hockey. At all stages pupils were encouraged to show care and concern for others through raising funds for charities.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils at P1 to P5 and a majority at P6 and P7 were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Pupils who were not attaining national levels were making good progress in their coursework. In recent years, attainment levels in reading had shown some improvement. However, attainment in writing had not markedly improved. The school was unable to provide consistent evidence of pupils' attainment in listening and talking. At all stages, pupils listened attentively and were confident when reporting back to their class. Pupils at P1 to P4 were developing understanding of a variety of writing styles including letter writing. They had good opportunities to use ICT in language work. P5 pupils had included clear and helpful writing instructions in a technology project. In P6, pupils had successfully developed their creative writing skills through working with a visiting author. Pupils at the early stages read fluently and with expression. P4 to P6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about books they had read. Pupils at P7 were able to read unfamiliar texts well, and talk about their favourite authors and the genre of reading they preferred. Expectations for the standards of handwriting and presentation were not high enough across the school. Pupils in the resource location with individualised education programmes (IEPs) were making appropriate progress.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Standards of attainment had improved in recent years at the early stages, but had remained fairly constant at the upper stages. Pupils in the resourced location were making appropriate progress. Most pupils at P1 to P5 and a majority at P6 and P7 were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Whilst most pupils coped well with their coursework, some were capable of tackling more challenging tasks and working at a brisker pace. Across the school, pupils had sound knowledge of the properties of shape, position and movement. By P7, most pupils could confidently interpret information from a range of graphs and charts. However, a minority were not confident in using databases and spreadsheets on computers. Pupils in P1 to P3 were making a very good start to their early number work and showed enthusiasm for their learning. At the middle stages, most pupils were progressing well through their appropriately challenging coursework. A minority of pupils at the upper stages were not confident when making conversions between fractions, decimals and percentages. Although all pupils tackled straightforward tasks in problem solving and enquiry, a minority lacked a sufficient range of strategies to deal with more complex problems.

## 5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's approaches to meeting pupils' needs were good. Teachers took account of prior learning when planning work for groups and individuals. Most pupils performed well in tasks set by teachers. However, there was a lack of challenge for a small number of more able pupils. Learning support teachers, including the English as an additional language (EAL) teacher, interacted very well with pupils but their deployment was not always effective. They assessed pupils' needs and planned carefully to meet these needs but did not consult sufficiently with class teachers. IEPs did not set out short and long term targets for pupils' learning clearly or in sufficient detail. There were good arrangements in place for the transition from primary to secondary school. A wide range of agencies including educational psychology, social work and a speech and language therapist worked in partnership with school staff to address pupils' needs. Staff had insufficient time for consultation and planning with each other or visiting specialists.

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

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school provided a very good level of pastoral care for pupils. All staff knew pupils well and were very sensitive to their individual physical, social and emotional needs. Staff were successfully developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. They implemented effectively the school's policies for the care and welfare of pupils and fully implemented the education authority's guidance on child protection. Appropriate arrangements were in place for the administration and issue of medicines. Pupils felt secure and happy in the school and knew what to do if they had concerns over issues such as bullying or their own personal safety. Effective arrangements were in place to facilitate the transfer of pupils to St John's High School. Pupils' personal and social education covered important aspects of healthy and safe living, including personal safety, relationships and substance misuse. Pupils' access to the Internet was controlled appropriately. Early morning checks were implemented effectively to ensure any pupils absent from school were safe.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The building was in a very good state of repair. Furniture and fittings were of a high standard. Teaching areas were of a very good size. Attractive indoor spaces, enhanced by very good displays of pupils' work, provided pupils with a stimulating learning environment. Pupils experienced a range of physical education activities in the school hall which were impacting positively on their well-being. Pupils made good use of supervised playground areas. The school had a secure entry system and was fully accessible to users with disabilities. The school and its environment were kept very clean and tidy.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Pupils and staff were very proud of their school and identified strongly with it. Relationships were very positive. Pupils had positive attitudes and almost all were well behaved. All teachers had good expectations of pupils' levels of behaviour, achievement and attendance. However, their expectations of pupils' attainment were not consistently high enough. Throughout the school, pupils were valued and treated fairly. Staff encouraged pupils to develop positive attitudes, tolerance and mutual respect for cultural and racial differences. They regularly celebrated pupils' achievements and successes through, for example, various reward systems. School assemblies provided regular opportunities for religious observance and the celebration of pupils' successes.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had very good links with parents and the local community. Parents felt welcomed at the school and were kept well informed about the life and work of the school. They received good reports on pupils' progress. Parents' views had been surveyed and the school had responded positively to their views. The School Board provided active support, and the school chaplain and community police officer contributed effectively to the work of the school. Parents of P1 pupils were given very helpful advice prior to their child's entry to the school. Parents had appropriate opportunities to view resources used for sensitive issues in health education. Staff had developed effective partnerships and accessed good support from the education authority.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

The headteacher and staff provided a caring, inclusive and supportive learning environment. Pupils were happy, motivated and very well behaved. They had frequent opportunities to take part in a range of worthwhile activities which broadened and enriched their educational experiences. There was some good and very good teaching in the school. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was good overall. There was scope to further improve pupils' attainment by providing them with greater challenge and improving the pace of lessons.

The headteacher had been in post for a short period at the time of the inspection. Since taking up post, she had quickly and accurately evaluated the school's strengths and development needs. She demonstrated extensive leadership qualities, and had used her very good inter-personal skills to gain the respect of teachers, parents and pupils and to build upon the strong teamwork already in place. The depute headteacher was hard working and strongly committed to the school. She provided the headteacher with very good support. The newly appointed principal teacher in the resourced location required further support to develop his skills and expertise in his new role. He was now working closely with the headteacher to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils within the resourced location. The senior management team had established a range of formal and informal approaches to monitoring the work of the school. This included visits to classes, monitoring teachers' plans, sampling pupils' work and use of questionnaires. However, over recent years areas for improvement, including gaps in the curriculum in the resourced location, deficiencies in the information contained within IEPs and arrangements for the effective integration of pupils into mainstream classes had not been clearly identified.

### **Main points for action**

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

- improve levels of attainment in English language and mathematics;
- ensure the pace of lessons is sufficiently brisk and follow-up activities are consistently stimulating and challenging to meet the needs of all pupils;
- further develop the current approaches to self-evaluation to ensure they are more appropriately focused on securing improvements in key areas of the school's work;
- review the curriculum within the resourced location; and
- improve the quality of information contained within the individualised educational programmes to track pupil progress.

**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.

David M Martin  
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.

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

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting pupils' needs	good

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

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

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.

<b>What parents thought the school did well</b>	<b>What parents think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome in the school and consulted them on decisions which affected their children.</li> <li>• Staff showed care and concern for their children’s care and welfare.</li> <li>• Their children enjoyed being at school, found the work challenging and were encouraged to work to the best of their ability.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>
<b>What pupils thought the school did well</b>	<b>What pupils think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers told them when they did something well and helped them when they were having difficulties.</li> <li>• Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could and checked their homework.</li> <li>• Almost all pupils enjoyed being at the school.</li> <li>• The school helped keep them safe and healthy and looked after them well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils could be improved.</li> </ul>

<b>What staff thought the school did well</b>	<b>What staff think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment, showed concern for their care and welfare and liked working in the school.</li> <li>• They gave both pupils and parents good feedback about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff had no significant matters they wished to see improved.</li> </ul>

## **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, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

## **HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure**

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

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If you have a concern about this report, you should contact our Complaints Manager by telephoning 01506 600258/9 or write to Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail [HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk). A copy of the HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure leaflet is available from this office by telephoning the above telephone number or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://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 (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](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk).

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