

**Whitfield Primary School
Dundee City Council
21 October 2008**

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1. Background

Whitfield Primary school was inspected in June 2008 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 members of the Parent Council 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 Whitfield area of Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 154. 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 caring and committed headteacher and the quality of staff teamwork.
- Very effective arrangements to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with additional support needs.
- The quality of partnership working.
- Pupils' broader achievements and their active involvement in enterprise activities, Eco-School Scotland events and out-of-school clubs.
- The school's impact in developing pupils' understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing.

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?

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 positive about the work of the school. They felt that their children were well looked after and enjoyed school. All parents agreed that teachers were good at explaining pupils' strengths and weaknesses and that parents' evenings were helpful and informative. A few parents felt that the school did not have a good reputation in the community. Pupils enjoyed being in school. They felt that they had a say in helping to make the school better and that teachers were good at explaining things and helping them. All pupils agreed that staff knew them well and helped to keep them safe and healthy. Staff were very positive about working in the school. They thought that the school was well led, that they worked well as a team and showed a high level of commitment to ensuring pupils' care and welfare.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

Staff provided pupils with a broad curriculum and a good balance of learning experiences. They planned their work well and provided pupils with a wide range of activities to develop their confidence and awareness of good citizenship. They successfully raised pupils' understanding of enterprise education, environmental issues and the importance of health and wellbeing. Staff made good use of computers and interactive whiteboards to develop and extend pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT). They were reviewing the programmes for environmental studies and expressive arts to ensure the ongoing development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as they moved through the school. Staff developed pupils' understanding of religion through the well-planned programme for religious and moral education. Visiting specialist teachers for music and physical education provided very good support for teachers and pupils. The early years' practitioner, active schools coordinator and healthy eating assistant made valuable contributions to the work of the school. They delivered highly effective learning experiences for pupils. The quality of teaching across the school was good with some examples of very effective teaching. Teachers made very good use of *Learning Together in Dundee* strategies to explain what pupils would be learning. As a result, they involved them more actively in planning their learning. Teachers interacted very well with pupils and had created a very positive climate for learning. They used a good range of teaching approaches, made effective use of questioning and gave clear explanations. In a few lessons, the tasks and activities were not sufficiently challenging enough to meet the needs of all learners. This was particularly the case in aspects of English language and environmental studies. Staff had consulted with parents and were reviewing the school's approaches to homework to ensure that tasks and activities were appropriately stimulating for all pupils.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. Most pupils were well motivated and enthusiastic learners. They worked well on tasks and activities. Staff were

responsive to pupils' needs, consulted with them and had started to discuss personal learning targets. Pupils had good opportunities to take part in a variety of practical learning activities in the classroom, playground and local community. Most could take responsibility for their own learning and were developing good skills in working independently. The quality of pupils' learning experiences in the P1 class was very good.

Improvements in performance

The school had made good improvements in performance over recent years. These included work in involving children in their own learning and in developing their independence. Further work was required to raise pupils' attainment in aspects of English language.

The quality of pupils' attainment in English language was satisfactory. Over the past three years, there had been a slight but steady improvement in the standard of pupils' listening, talking, reading and writing. Across the school, most pupils achieved the appropriate national level in reading and the majority of pupils achieved these levels in talking, listening and writing. Pupils with additional support needs were very well supported and were making good progress in their learning. Most pupils listened well to adults and were confident when expressing their views and opinions. Most were competent in reading for information and used these skills well when fact-finding for topics they were studying. Many could identify different types of books and talk about the skills used by authors. At all stages, pupils were developing appropriate skills in writing for a variety of purposes. Across the school, pupils' skills in spelling, handwriting and presentation required further development. At times, the pace of learning in writing was too slow and some tasks lacked sufficient challenge.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Across the school, most pupils achieved the appropriate national levels. At the early stages, an increasing number of pupils were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were very well supported and were making good progress in their learning. Pupils had a good understanding of information handling. They could successfully carry out surveys, create graphs and interpret the results. They made effective use of computers to create graphs and use spreadsheets to organise and display information. Pupils' skills in mental and written calculation were good. Most pupils had a good understanding of basic number work but were less confident in using fractions and decimals. They had a good understanding of the properties of shapes. Pupils in P7 could discuss and describe angles and bearings. Throughout the school, pupils were not skilled at using or applying a sufficiently wide range of problem-solving strategies.

Pupils at all stages were developing a broad range of skills in using ICT to support and extend their learning. Their understanding of science and technology was good. With the support of the enthusiastic healthy eating assistant, pupils were developing their awareness of good health. They understood the importance of healthy eating by taking part in a variety of well-planned and purposeful learning activities.

Staff provided pupils with a wide range of activities to develop their personal and social skills and promote their wider achievements. They provided a very good range

of activities to develop and reinforce pupils' skills in enterprise education and promote their awareness of the environment. Activities included taking part in a project to improve the playground shelter by designing and painting attractive pictures. Pupils had a variety of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through activities such as working on the pupil council and eco-school committee and the website group. The school had gained the Eco-Schools Scotland silver award for its work in environmental education. Staff and pupils were actively involved in raising funds for a variety of local and international charities. The school had received silver awards for enterprise education and health promotion. In addition, the school had received two Focus on Achievement awards from Dundee City Council. Pupils took part in a significant number of out-of-school clubs and activities which were organised by staff and the active schools coordinator. Pupils in P7 had taken part in a successful residential week to develop teambuilding and citizenship skills.

Staff were committed to ongoing improvement and engaged positively in the work of the school. They had made good progress in implementing the current priorities in the school's improvement plan. They had introduced a range of new assessment strategies, raised pupils' attainment in mathematics and improved the quality of pupils' learning experiences in areas such as enterprise and health education. The school been very successful in meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils as well as those with additional support needs.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Arrangements to meet pupils' learning needs were good. Teachers took effective steps to meet the different learning needs of pupils, including the successful use of team-teaching approaches in mathematics and English language. They were improving their approaches to monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. This included making increased use of assessment information to identify the next steps in learning. In addition, teachers met regularly with the senior staff to discuss pupils' progress. The school had very good systems in place to identify and support vulnerable pupils and those experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning. The depute headteacher was responsible for coordinating the arrangements for learning support. He had worked closely with learning support staff, classroom teachers and parents to produce clearly-written individualised educational programmes (IEPs) with appropriate learning targets. The two support for learning teachers provided high quality support and advice for pupils and staff. Classroom assistants worked well with class teachers and provided strong support for pupils. The school worked in partnership with an extensive range of agencies including educational psychology, social work and the speech and language therapy service to address pupils' needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school had very effective arrangements in place to ensure pupils' care and welfare. Staff were sensitive to the social and emotional needs of pupils and provided a high standard of care. They were familiar with a range of relevant policies, including those for child protection, equal opportunities and anti-bullying. They implemented these policies well and had all taken part in appropriate child protection training. Effective arrangements were in place for the administration of medicines and safe use of the Internet. Pupils' attendance was monitored well and effective procedures were in place to check on the location of absent pupils. Staff took very effective steps to ensure that all pupils felt safe and secure in school. They made good use of the school's health education programme to develop pupils' awareness of health education, relationships and substance misuse. Effective procedures were in place to support pupils entering P1 from nursery, and for P7 pupils transferring to Braeview Academy.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. The interior of the school was bright and spacious. Staff made very good use of the spacious classrooms and additional teaching areas. They had produced high quality displays across the school. Pupils benefited from access to the Internet in all teaching areas. Staff made effective use of interactive whiteboards to enhance their teaching. They made very good use of the large gym hall for drama activities and physical education. The school had made creative use of surplus teaching space to create areas. These were used for two spacious and attractive libraries, a playroom, resource rooms and craft room. The school's security arrangements were appropriate. There was limited access for pupils and visitors with restricted mobility. The exterior of the building was not attractive. The playground was spacious and staff made effective use of the school grounds to promote pupils' learning.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	Staff had successfully created a positive climate for learning. There was a strong sense of mutual respect and most pupils were well behaved and friendly. Teachers were skilled at dealing with challenging behaviour. Pupils enjoyed being at school and most responded well to the strategies being used to reward positive behaviour. Staff worked together as an effective team and staff morale was high. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Staff worked sensitively and appropriately to support vulnerable pupils. They made effective use of praise to motivate and encourage pupils and reward their achievements. They had appropriately high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Their expectations of pupils' attainment were not always as high. Staff treated pupils equally and fairly. They provided pupils with regular opportunities for religious observance. The school's approaches to developing pupils' understanding of racial equality and diversity were limited.
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school was committed to extending the level of partnership with parents. The recently formed Parent Council supported the work of the school well. A few parents helped out with playground improvements and enterprise activities. Parents attended assemblies and school events. The school kept parents well informed through regular newsletters, parents' meetings and informative progress reports. Parents were confident that if they raised any concerns, school staff would deal with them promptly and effectively. Staff had consulted parents appropriately about sensitive health education issues.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Staff in Whitfield Primary School provided pupils with a caring and attractive learning environment. Staff placed a strong emphasis on pupils' care and welfare and worked very well together to provide a high standard of pastoral care. Most pupils were motivated and responded well to the expectations of staff. Pupils had very positive learning experiences in areas such as enterprise and health education. They were developing a range of effective citizenship skills and were actively involved in the life and work of the school. Pupils' attainment in mathematics and reading was good and their attainment in talking, listening and writing was satisfactory. The pace of learning and choice of tasks did not always provide sufficient challenge to meet the needs of all

learners. The level of support for vulnerable pupils and those experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning was very good.

The headteacher provided good leadership. She worked well with staff and had created a strong sense of teamwork. She was respected by staff, pupils and parents. The headteacher had been very successful in improving key aspects of the school's work such as enterprise, health and environmental education. She had introduced new programmes and resources to improve the quality of pupils' learning in mathematics and English language. She recognised the continued need to raise pupils' attainment in writing and to ensure that the needs of all pupils were fully met. The deputy headteacher provided very good support for the headteacher and staff. He carried out his remit very effectively, particularly the work relating to support for learning. Staff were actively involved in improving key aspects of the school's work through their involvement in working parties. The school's arrangements for evaluating the quality of its work were good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher met teachers regularly to monitor and track pupils' progress. They provided helpful written comments on teachers' plans and had introduced a programme of classroom visits to observe and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. Staff used a broad range of assessment information to monitor and predict pupils' progress. These arrangements were not yet sufficiently rigorous and did not ensure that all pupils were making appropriate progress. The school had sought parents' and pupils' views on aspects of its work through written questionnaires. With the continuing support of the education authority, the school had the capacity for further improvement.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take account of the need to:

- improve pupils' attainment, particularly in writing;
- ensure that the pace of learning and choice of activities provide sufficient challenge to meet the needs of all learners; and
- continue to develop rigorous systems to monitor and track pupils' 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.

Michael Wood
HM Inspector

21 October 2008

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?	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	very good
Improvements in performance	good

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

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	good
Improvement through 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
satisfactory	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"> • Children in the school were treated fairly, enjoyed being at the school and found the work stimulating and challenging. • Teachers set high expectations and encouraged pupils to work to the best of their ability. • Parents felt welcome in the school. • The school was well led and there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed being at the school and being involved in decisions about making the school better. • They thought their teachers explained things clearly and praised them when they worked well. • Teachers checked their homework and expected them to work hard. • The school helped them to keep safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancillary staff and almost all teachers were pleased with all aspects of the life and work of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

Appendix 3 Good practice

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

Whistlefield Enterprise Company

The Whistlefield Enterprise Company was set up by staff to meet the diverse learning and social needs of a small group of pupils. The aim was to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence by providing a context in which they would develop and lead an enterprise activity. This would involve the school and local community. The focus of the enterprise activity was on Cultural Heritage. The emphasis was on traditional activities such as music, singing, dance and storytelling. Pupils in the group were responsible for planning, organising and running the events, including the fundraising aspects. The target audience for each event included staff, pupils, parents and family friends. The planned events were very successful and the quality of pupils' learning experiences was high. As part of the activities, pupils had to acquire skills such as learning to play tin whistles and bodrams as well as singing traditional songs and learning dances. They had opportunities to work with a number of adults who were able to share their knowledge of local heritage and teach them to play instruments. As an extension of the initiative, the pupils in the group were currently producing a compact disc of music and songs. The impact on individual pupils could be seen clearly in their increased self-confidence and sense of value within the school community.

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 have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 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 (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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