

**Abbeyhill Primary School  
City of Edinburgh Council  
4 May 2004**

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## 1. Background

Abbeyhill Primary School was inspected in January 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 and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and carers, pupils from P4 to P7, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents.

The school serves the north-east area of central Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection the roll was 278, including 54 in the nursery class. 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.

- The friendly, supportive and inclusive ethos for learning.
- Staff commitment and teamwork, and the quality of relationships between staff and pupils.
- The school's commitment to promoting equality and fairness and to recognising and celebrating success.
- Extensive opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills.
- Productive partnerships with the School Board, PTA and the local community.
- Consistently high quality support for pupils provided by class teachers, learning assistants and the support for learning teacher.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher, including the effective implementation of classroom observation visits with the support of the deputy headteacher.

### **3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff**

Parents and carers, pupils and staff were very pleased with almost all aspects of the school's work. Parents and carers thought the school was well led and that it had a very good reputation in the local community. They felt that children enjoyed being at school and were treated fairly by staff who showed concern for their care and welfare. About a fifth of parents and carers wanted further explanation of how they could support their children with homework and were unsure of the school's priorities for improvement. Pupils enjoyed being at school. They spoke highly of the support they received from their teachers and of the operation of the pupil council. Some felt that pupils who misbehaved were not dealt with effectively by teachers. Teachers and staff were positive about almost all aspects of school life. However, a number of staff expressed concerns about communication difficulties caused by the two separate buildings.

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

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

The school offered pupils a broad and balanced curriculum, including French at P6 and P7. The good emphasis given to health and personal and social education contributed effectively to the confidence and positive attitudes of many pupils. Play activities in P1 and P2 contributed positively to developing pupils' social skills. However, the mathematics programme gave insufficient attention to problem solving and enquiry activities. Teachers planned effectively to create very good opportunities that linked curriculum areas in a way that enhanced teaching and learning. Pupils' research skills were successfully developed in a range of situations, and pupils were capable of applying them across the curriculum. Staff had begun to address the lack of opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology (ICT) but were being hampered by differences in software provided by the authority for laptop and desktop computers.

Most teachers had a very good working relationship with pupils, and the quality of teacher-pupil interaction was high. Teachers were well organised, used a range of effective approaches and gave clear explanations. Most made skilful use of questioning to encourage pupils to reflect on key learning points. However, they did not always make the objectives of lessons sufficiently clear to pupils. The pace of learning was good allowing pupils to make appropriate progress in their classwork, and they had very good opportunities to work collaboratively. Teachers and learning assistants provided a very good level of support for pupils with specific learning difficulties. However, in some situations they did not give pupils enough responsibility for working independently or fully challenge the most able. Most teachers made good use of homework and the school provided good quality advice to parents on how to support their children's learning. Teachers' plans made good use of assessment information to inform the next steps in learning.

Most pupils were motivated and enthusiastic learners. In the most effective lessons all pupils listened attentively to teachers and produced work of a good quality. Almost all teachers used praise effectively to motivate and encourage pupils. The school had introduced a system to promote positive behaviour. At weekly assemblies, the headteacher presented certificates to celebrate pupils' academic, sporting, artistic and

social achievements. These measures had a positive impact on developing pupils' confidence, self-esteem and social skills. At all stages, teachers took care to ensure that all pupils were included in activities and tried hard to meet their needs. Pupils were encouraged to realise they were unique, to accept differences, and be tolerant of others. Pupils' attitudes towards fairness and equality were well developed through discussion of people's experiences from the past. The health education programme paid appropriate attention to all the needs of young people. In their studies of religious and moral education pupils learned about the need for rules and increased their awareness of citizenship and religions. Pupils undertook rotas of responsibilities, including playground and classroom duties. The school organised an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, including residential experiences. The pupil council was valued by pupils and had been successful in improving aspects of the school's work. Senior pupils were mature and responsible.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good and improving. Most pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading and writing, and some were exceeding these. Almost all pupils listened attentively and responded well to teachers' questions. Pupils conveyed information and expressed their views clearly, particularly from P5 to P7. Most pupils read for pleasure and discussed books that they had read. Pupils in most classes wrote well for a variety of purposes. Pupils, particularly in the upper stages, produced some good examples of imaginative and functional writing. Throughout the school, there was little evidence of pupils using ICT to plan, draft and edit their stories. An interactive white board, however, was being used effectively to develop pupils' note-taking skills in P6 and P7.

### **Mathematics**

The school had made good progress in raising attainment in mathematics in recent years. Most pupils in the early and upper stages and the majority in the middle stages were achieving appropriate national levels. Pupils showed good skills in interpreting graphs and charts but had too few opportunities to use ICT to handle information. At all stages, pupils' numerical skills and their mental agility were well developed with some pupils in the upper stages being particularly good. Pupils had good skills in handling money and at most stages had a good knowledge of shape, position and movement. At all stages, pupils had insufficient awareness of the range of strategies they might use to solve problems and many found difficulty in setting down solutions in a clear and logical fashion.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

The headteacher and staff were strongly committed to ensuring that pupils' well-being was a key priority in the life of the school. They knew pupils well and were sensitive to their social and emotional needs. Child protection procedures were well-established and effective. Care and welfare arrangements were very good. Arrangements for supervision of pupils and for identifying and responding to pupils' concerns about bullying were very good. Pupils felt safe and confident, enjoyed being in school and

felt they were treated fairly by staff. Good account was taken of pupils' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. An appropriate race equality policy had been adopted and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds enjoyed very good relations.

Teachers identified pupils' learning needs from early in P1 and took good account of the information provided by the nursery at the time of transition. In consultation with class teachers, the support for learning teacher planned appropriate work that helped pupils overcome difficulties they were experiencing in their classwork. Support for learning staff had developed well-structured, individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils with additional support needs. A range of outside agencies were used effectively to support pupils and meet their varied needs. Learning assistants were well deployed across the school to support individual pupils and classes.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation was good. The school comprised two separate buildings, both of which had wheelchair access to the ground floor but not to other levels. Door entry and CCTV systems provided high quality security. Staff did not make full use of the telephone and radio systems provided for communicating between the two buildings. Play areas were well-organised and included picnic benches and a garden area. Classrooms were spacious, well-organised and bright. Staff displayed pupils' work effectively in classrooms and corridors. A well organised library encouraged pupils' interests in books but there was no designated area where larger pupil groups could use computers.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The atmosphere in the school was very friendly and welcoming. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Overall, pupils were well behaved, courteous to each other and proud to be part of the school community. Most wore school uniform. The school took good account of pupils' views. Teachers were supportive of one another. Pupils' achievements were celebrated regularly at school assemblies, and displays of individual and school achievements were prominent throughout the school. Most staff had consistently high expectations of pupils' attainment. The school promoted an ethos of understanding encompassing divergent religions and cultures. Religious observance received appropriate emphasis in assemblies led by the headteacher and school chaplains.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Partnership with parents and the community	The school's links with parents, other schools, educational support services and the wider community were very well developed. The School Board and PTA provided active support. Good links with local industry provided pupils with very good opportunities to participate in activities that enriched the curriculum. The school communicated very effectively with parents through informative reports on pupils' progress and regular newsletters. Parents received useful information on how to help their children with their learning.

## 7. Improving the school

The headteacher provided the school with very good leadership. She had shown a high degree of commitment, professional expertise and imagination in managing and improving the school over a number of years. She had a clear vision for the school, and national priorities were at the forefront of what the school was seeking to achieve. She was well supported by the deputy headteacher whose skills and abilities complemented those of the headteacher.

Staff were deployed to ensure best use of their talents and were fully involved in policy-making and planning for improvement. The school's self-evaluation procedures and planning for improvement provided a sound basis on which to continue to improve performance. However, targets for improvement were not specified clearly enough. The management team had the respect and support of parents and staff. They regularly monitored learning and teaching and provided helpful feedback to staff. Teachers were being reviewed within the authority's scheme for professional review and development and had benefited from appropriate staff development activities.

Abbeyhill Primary School was an effective school that was highly valued by pupils, parents, staff and the community. The quality of management, the commitment of all staff and the active support of parents meant that the school was well placed to ensure pupils achieved their full potential.

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- use resources more effectively to develop pupils' skills in writing;
- increase pupils' awareness of and ability to apply a range of strategies for solving problems in mathematics;
- improve provision of ICT and use it more effectively as a tool for learning; and
- use existing good practice to ensure consistently high standards of teaching in all classes, particularly in the middle stages.

### **What happens next?**

As a result of the good performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents and carers.

Neil MacLeod  
HM Inspector

4 May 2004

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership

### **We judged the following to be good**

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Accommodation and facilities
- Self-evaluation
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- No aspects were found to be in this category

### **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.

<b>What pleased parents and carers most</b>	<b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoyed school and found work stimulating and challenging.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils.</li> <li>• Staff made parents feel welcome.</li> <li>• The high standards set by teachers and their ability to identify pupils' strengths and needs.</li> <li>• The quality of information received through newsletters, school reports and parents evenings.</li> <li>• The school's good reputation in the local community.</li> <li>• The school was well led, acted on parents' concerns and fostered mutual respect between teachers and pupils.</li> <li>• Buildings were kept in good order.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on how to support their children with homework.</li> <li>• Information about the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils and on the standard of work expected from pupils.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased pupils most</b>	<b>What pupils would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers explained work clearly, listened to them, and praised their achievements.</li> <li>• Staff were kind, approachable and helpful.</li> <li>• Teachers expected pupils to work hard and explained how they could improve.</li> <li>• The school was a friendly place where they felt safe and cared for.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangements for dealing with some pupils' misbehaviour.</li> </ul>

<b>What pleased staff most</b>	<b>What staff would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consistently high standards set for pupils' attainment, behaviour and care and welfare of pupils.</li> <li>• Effective staff communication, and good opportunities for professional development.</li> <li>• Regular opportunities for celebrating pupils' success.</li> <li>• Enthusiastic pupils and the mutual respect between teachers and pupils.</li> <li>• The effective methods used for dealing with any indiscipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspects about effective communication made more difficult by the geography of the buildings.</li> </ul>

## **How can you contact us?**

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, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8178. Copies are also available on our website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

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