

**St Cuthbert's RC Primary School
City of Edinburgh Council
12 June 2007**

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1. Background

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School was inspected in March 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 the chairperson of the School Board 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.

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School is a denominational school serving an area of west Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection the roll was 165. In addition, twelve pupils were placed in the two language and communication classes (LCC). These pupils were placed by the education authority, and came from the west side of Edinburgh. The pupils all had additional support needs arising from autistic spectrum disorder. The principal teacher with responsibility for the LCC was on secondment at the time of the inspection, and during this secondment supported the work of the classes one day a week. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Very strong partnerships with the local community which enhanced pupils' learning experiences in school.
- Provision made for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in the language and communication classes, and their inclusion within the school.
- The learning experiences and attainment of pupils at the early years.

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 almost all aspects of the school. They felt welcome in the school, and that any requests for information or concerns were addressed quickly. They appreciated the contact between home and school through pupils' home liaison notebooks. A small number of parents felt that the headteacher could provide more effective leadership and had not always dealt fully with their concerns. Parents of pupils in the LCC felt fully involved in their children's education, and found the daily diaries which commented on pupils' progress towards targets very helpful. Pupils enjoyed school, and particularly liked the educational excursions organised to support their learning. They liked the wide range of after-school activities. However, about a quarter did not think the school dealt effectively with bullying and almost a third did not think all pupils were treated fairly in school. All staff enjoyed working in the school and felt that teamwork within the staff group was a strength. Teaching staff were very positive about all aspects of the school. Support staff felt that their management structure was not fully effective, and that communications between them and senior managers could improve further.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. Staff provided pupils with a range of activities which helped them develop skills in a number of key areas. In the early years, teachers were particularly skilled in integrating pupils' learning across different curricular areas and ensuring pupils learned in a meaningful context. Pupils' learning was enriched by visiting specialists in music and physical education. However, not all pupils were yet receiving two hours of physical education a week. The religious and moral education programme included opportunities for pupils to explore ideas through art and design and drama. Good attention was given to enterprise education and to the promotion of healthy eating. In the early years pupils had made a good start to reading and writing. The programme for reading in P4 to P7 lacked sufficient structure to ensure this very good progress was sustained. In most classes, teachers delivered well-planned and organised lessons. They ensured that pupils knew what they were going to learn, and could relate it to previous learning. They consistently checked that pupils had understood new facts and ideas. Teachers at the early stages, including the younger class in the LCC, were particularly skilled in interacting with pupils. They used questioning effectively to maintain interest and attention, to help pupils think out their answers and encourage development of expressive language. At the time of the inspection all the information and communications technology (ICT) equipment had just been renewed. Teachers were not yet able to access the new hardware. They had, however, made good use of ICT before the programme of renewal, in particular to support pupils' writing. Teachers did not make sufficient use of assessment information or discussion with pupils to ensure they provided appropriate

activities and taught lessons at the correct level. There was not yet consistency across all classes in ensuring pupils were appropriately challenged and stimulated. Regular homework was well-planned and linked to class work.

From P1 to P3 pupils were well-motivated, enthusiastic learners with very positive relationships with teachers. For example, pupils at P2 were highly engaged with a range of challenging and creative activities, including work in language and mathematics developed from a class topic. Pupils in the early years had good opportunities for play activities which contributed to the development of their language and social skills. In all classes, pupils were beginning to develop skills in working in pairs and groups. For example, pupils in P3 worked well in small groups to solve a number puzzle and pupils at P6 shared ideas to build up a character for a story. Very good use had been made of ICT to support pupils experiencing difficulties in writing. However, from P4 to P7, pupils spent too much time on tasks which were repetitive and involved them in practising skills which they had already achieved.

The school had taken some steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Pupils participated in a wide range of lunch-time and after-school activities which encouraged physical activity and interest in leisure activities. These included the popular basketball club, library club, Highland dancing and cheerleading. Pupils had all enjoyed preparing for and participating in a recent celebration of Scottish culture and in the school's jubilee assembly. These events helped pupils present their work about the history of their school and community to an audience. Pupils were developing a strong sense of their role as citizens through links with other schools, including an African school, and through their regular visits to residential homes for the elderly. Pupils at P7 benefited from a residential experience which focused on developing their personal and social skills. Pupils in the LCC had developed a good understanding of how to keep healthy and were beginning to make more varied and healthy choices for eating.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was adequate. In recent years, attainment in reading and writing had fluctuated with a slight increase being evident in writing. Most pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading and writing. An increasing number of pupils were achieving national levels of attainment in reading and writing at P2. However, this good progress was not sustained into later stages. Work in class did not consistently challenge pupils. Most pupils with additional support needs were making good progress. The majority of pupils listened attentively and responded appropriately to teachers' questions and instructions. They were less skilled in group discussions. At P3, pupils read aloud confidently and could extract information from texts. By P7, a significant number were not skilled at discussing texts and authors' use of language. Across the school, pupils were developing an interest in books and reading for pleasure. During World Book Day, pupils had developed their understanding of creating characters and story lines through a range of drama activities. In most classes, pupils wrote for a variety of purposes. In a few classes pupils were developing skills in assessing their own writing. However, the quality of pupils' writing was not consistently good across all classes. In the LCC, good use was made of books to motivate pupils to respond to the written word and to talk and listen in a variety of interesting contexts. Across the school, the presentation of written work was good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. The school had improved levels of attainment in recent years. All pupils at P3 had attained appropriate national levels with most pupils attaining these levels earlier than might normally be expected. The pace of progress slowed down at the middle stages. At P6 and P7, the majority had attained appropriate national levels. Pupils at all stages had a good understanding of information handling, but were less confident about using ICT to create graphs and databases. Pupils at P1 to P3 were confident in the work they undertook in class. They were developing accuracy in mental calculations and were able to describe how they undertook calculations in number, money and measurement. At P4, pupils had good skills in number, money and measurement, and could tackle new and challenging work confidently. Pupils at P7 were lacking in confidence in mental calculations, and experienced some difficulty in applying their mathematics in new situations. Pupils' skills in shape, position and movement were developing well as they progressed through the school. At the upper stages, for example, pupils had a very good knowledge of angles. Although pupils throughout the school were developing skills in problem-solving, those at the upper stages were not confident in this aspect of mathematics. At P7, pupils could not talk confidently about a range of strategies to solve problems and were not sufficiently secure in tackling problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The overall provision for meeting the needs of pupils was adequate. Flexible grouping of pupils in mathematics from P5 to P7, including small booster groups, was beginning to have a positive impact on meeting needs. At the early stages, teachers knew the pupils very well, and ensured that their work was appropriately challenging, and completed at an appropriate pace. At the middle and upper stages, teaching did not consistently take account of the range of pupils' needs within classes. Learning assistants provided well-judged support for pupils' learning in classes which helped pupils with additional support needs to keep on task and ensured they understood what was required of them. The support for learning teacher effectively supported pupils in small groups. She made good use of ICT to motivate pupils and support their learning. She coordinated and monitored individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils who required them, ensuring that pupils, parents and staff agreed appropriate and challenging learning targets. Pupils with IEPs were making steady progress. Support from other agencies made a positive contribution for pupils who required it, for example through the small group work undertaken by the therapy inclusion team with younger pupils. However, there was not a sufficiently strategic overview of the range of learning needs in the school. Appropriate systems were not in place to ensure pupils' learning needs were identified and monitored, and that available support was always used effectively.

Pupils within the LCC were making very good progress. Well-planned admissions procedures, agreed with external agencies and school staff, ensured that pupils were placed appropriately. Transition into the provision, and, when necessary, on to other placements, was very well-managed. Staff planned programmes of learning very effectively with a strong focus on personal and social development. Pupils had high quality IEPs which included profiles from the speech and language therapists, clear assessments and next steps in learning. Teachers provided a calm and supportive environment which included a range of well developed approaches and methodologies for promoting good behaviour and

rewarding achievements. Pupils' learning and social development was very good. Pupils were relaxed, confident and ready to learn. Teachers and speech and language therapists worked very effectively together to develop pupils' language and communication skills. Through consistent approaches, and strategies suited to the specific needs of the pupils, they had ensured that pupils were making very good progress. For example, a few pupils had moved from being dependent on continuous visual support to following verbal instructions. Pupils participated well in group situations and were making progress towards developing the necessary skills to work independently. Pupils were making good progress in mathematics and a small number were working with their own stage group in mainstream classes in mathematics. Daily movement programmes developed concentration, interaction and sharing. Pupils who were included for part of the week in mainstream classes were making good progress. There was scope for further development of this form of inclusion. All pupils participated in whole school weekly assemblies and mainstream pupils also worked collaboratively in the LCC which contributed to the development of good social skills. Pupils evaluated their own progress daily and shared this information with parents in their home-school diaries. The quality of provision for meeting pupils' needs in the LCC was very strong.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school's arrangements for meeting pupils' care and welfare needs were good. Staff knew pupils and their families well. They were aware of issues or circumstances which affected children and supported them very well. They had a good understanding of child protection procedures and how to respond to concerns about children. Pupils were very well supervised in the playground. At the upper stages, pupils were not always clear who to go to if they needed help. The school had taken initial steps to promote pupils' health. An annual health focus week and contributions from agencies such as Snack Attack and the Food Lab supported this initiative. Pupils showed a good understanding of the principles of healthy eating.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was adequate. Classrooms were a good size and fit for purpose. There was an attractive multi-purpose hall which was well used. Security measures for the building and spacious playground areas were appropriate. An attractive area had been developed as a peace garden and plans were in place to further enhance the outdoor area with a mosaic celebrating the school's jubilee. The accommodation for the LCC was spacious, and enhanced by a soft play area, and small rooms for individual work. Facilities on the upper floor of the school did not have access for those with restricted mobility. Pupils' toilets for P6 and P7 were unsatisfactory as they did not provide for pupils' privacy and dignity.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Parents, pupils and staff identified strongly with the school and were proud of its achievements and its traditions. In most classes, relationships between pupils and staff were very positive and pupils interacted and worked well together. Pupils' behaviour inside the school and in the playground was very good. Pupils did not feel that the pupil council in its current form provided them with an appropriate means of being consulted about school matters. They did not feel sufficiently involved in improving their school. Staff worked well together and recent steps taken by the headteacher had improved communications across all staff. Most teachers used praise well and there were good opportunities for celebrating pupils' achievements. In some classes teachers' high expectations encouraged pupils to achieve well. However, there was not a culture of very high expectations of pupils' achievements across the school. Pupils were learning respect and tolerance through the very effective religious and moral education programme. The school's links with Malawi and Sri Lanka promoted their understanding of global citizenship. The staff had developed a positive behaviour policy which had improved behaviour across the school. However, further work was required to ensure that it was implemented consistently at all times and that pupils felt confident that they were treated fairly. A race equality policy was in place, but the school had not sufficiently addressed the promotion of race equality within the school. There were regular well-organised opportunities for religious worship supported by the priest and the parish.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The quality of partnerships with parents and the community was very good. Staff had developed very good links with parents and the local community. Links with the parish and the priest were very strong, and the school shared many activities, such as a visiting church choir, with the parish. Parents had regular opportunities to support the school, for example through taking after-school activities. Parents of pupils in the LCC were kept well-informed of pupils' progress and were involved regularly through reviews and visits. Parents were consulted about sensitive health issues and, more recently, on homework. Reports to parents on pupils' progress were comprehensive and detailed. Parents found the regular meetings with class teachers helpful and informative. Links with the local community and a range of partner agencies were very well-established and contributed significantly to the curriculum and pupils' learning. The school was very well supported by the local community council. Links between the school and the other denominational schools and St Augustine's High School were strong. There were also very good links with local non-denominational schools.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School provided a supportive environment where pupils were well behaved and worked hard. Pupils' attainment in English language had fluctuated, but was beginning to show signs of improvement. Attainment in mathematics was improving for most pupils. Pupils in the early years had very good educational experiences and were progressing well. In all areas of the school, most pupils with additional support needs were making good progress in their learning. At the middle and upper stages, greater consistency was required to challenge pupils and meet their needs. Pupils in the LCC were making very good progress. The overall quality of teaching was good. However, the headteacher and staff now needed to ensure more consistent, progressive learning for pupils in order to improve attainment, particularly in English language and mathematics.

The overall quality of leadership in the school was adequate. The headteacher had established good relationships with most parents, other local schools, support agencies and members of the local community. Her consultative style of management had built staff confidence, encouraged many to improve their knowledge and expertise and successfully developed teamwork. She now needed to build on these strengths and focus more closely on ensuring improvement in attainment and pupils' learning. The

remit of the principal teachers needed to be reviewed to support the headteacher in a whole school approach to improving aspects of the curriculum. The principal teacher for LCC supported the work of the staff in these classes very effectively. A few teachers were leading whole school developments, for example in health promotion and enterprise education. The school's approaches to self-evaluation were adequate. Teachers had made some use of quality indicators developed nationally to evaluate aspects of their work. They now needed to focus more rigorously on taking action to achieve improvement for pupils. The headteacher and principal teachers monitored the work of the school through discussing teachers' plans, tracking attainment and informal visits to classrooms. This was not sufficiently rigorous to ensure sufficient impact on improving pupils' learning experiences and their attainment. The school will require support from the education authority to take forward the recommendations from this report and achieve substantial improvements in pupils' learning and achievements.

Main points for action

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

- raise attainment in English language and mathematics, particularly at the middle and upper stages;
- ensure activities set for pupils are appropriate and that pupils are sufficiently challenged;
- ensure pupils' views are listened to and appropriate action taken;
- improve arrangements for self-evaluation; and
- take action to improve the toilet accommodation for senior pupils.

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 continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in a report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Christine Knight
HM Inspector

12 June 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	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	adequate
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate

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

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	adequate
Leadership across the school	adequate
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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoyed school. • Information sent home and meetings with teachers were helpful. • Teachers set high standards and expected pupils to do their best. • The school was well thought of by the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were not always clear about the school's priorities for improvement. • A minority of parents did not think the school was well led. • Parents of pupils in the LCC did not think the school made clear to parents what standards of work they expected.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their teachers explained things to them well, expected them to do their best and helped them with their work. • The school helped them stay safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were not always treated fairly. • They did not have sufficient say about how to improve the school.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staff were happy with all aspects of school life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support staff thought communication could be improved.

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 Children and Families, 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, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8371. 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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