

**Lochies School
Sauchie
Clackmannanshire Council
24 June 2008**

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1. Background

Lochies School was inspected in March 2008 as part of a national sample of provision for pupils with additional support needs. 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 communication and language and understanding and relating to the environment (URE).

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work, observed and spoke with pupils and interviewed staff. Members of the inspection team also met with a group of parents¹. There was no Parent Council.

Lochies School is situated in the town of Sauchie. It is the only special school in Clackmannanshire for primary-aged pupils. Lochies School provides education for pupils with additional support needs arising from severe and complex learning needs and autism spectrum disorders. Lochies School is on a shared campus with Deerpark Primary School. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 23 including one pupil with a shared placement in a mainstream school. All pupils were provided with free school meals. Pupils' attendance was above the national average. The headteacher has been in post since August 2007. In the last six months a new appointment had been made to the post of deputy headteacher.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' opportunities for responsible and independent learning experiences.
- The quality of relationships among pupils and staff.
- The quality of teamwork across the school and with partner agencies.
- Inclusive approaches to meeting learning needs with other schools and the local community.
- The school's success in actively involving parents.
- The success of the headteacher in leading school improvements.

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 pupils and to all parents and all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

All parents who responded to the questionnaire thought that their children enjoyed being at school, that the school was well led and had a good reputation in the community. They said that staff consulted them well on decisions affecting their children and kept them informed about their children's progress. Pupils who were supported to complete the questionnaires said that they enjoyed school and felt safe and well looked after. Due to the nature of their complex learning and communication difficulties, some pupils were not able to express their views to members of the inspection team. However, they conveyed the feeling that they enjoyed coming to school and showed pleasure when taking an active part in classroom activities. All staff thought that senior managers worked effectively as a team. They felt that standards set for pupils' behaviour were consistently upheld and that pupils' successes were recognised and celebrated regularly.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided pupils with a suitably broad, progressive, relevant and enjoyable curriculum. Staff were skilled in using a range of teaching approaches to communicate with pupils including visual timetables and use of symbols such as Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS). Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was integrated across the curriculum, with a specific focus at the beginning and end of the school day to further develop pupils' independence and social skills. Some pupils benefited from additional learning time at lunchtime and in after-school clubs. Staff made good use of the local and wider environment to enable pupils to use and develop their skills in real life contexts such as supermarkets and the Forth Bridge crossings. The school had established effective links with Deerpark Primary School. For a few pupils, the school's inclusive approach extended to successful supported experiences in their local schools. Across the school, effective movement programmes and playground games involved all pupils in enjoyable and challenging active sports. Activities such as swimming and golf also helped to promote pupils' confidence and self esteem. A well-planned programme including staged visits and input from all services helped prepare pupils well for entering and leaving Lochies School. Sometimes effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) helped extend pupils' learning and skills. This good practice was not yet consistent enough across the school.

Overall the quality of pupils' learning experiences was very good. Pupils were motivated and participated well in activities. Across the school, pupils were making good or very good progress towards their individual targets. Senior pupils were aware of their strengths and what to do to improve. Staff promoted pupils' confidence in class and in the local community. Pupils were encouraged to be independent and to make choices. Pupils were given responsibility for tasks around the school. They took messages to classes and staff and collated numbers for lunch. Relationships between staff and pupils were very positive. Pupils responded well to praise. Staff ensured that pupils with more complex learning

needs were enabled to interact successfully with one another during activities. A few pupils with autism spectrum disorder had their learning extended by verbal behavioural analysis (VBA) workers.

The school had taken positive steps to help pupils develop their achievements. Pupils' achievements were regularly celebrated within individual classes, for example through 'Star of the Week' awards, and recognised at whole school assemblies. Staff made good use of photographic evidence to record pupils' achievements. Pupils participated in whole-school expressive arts activities, which enhanced their confidence and self esteem. These activities included, for example, an annual nativity production. Pupils worked hard to achieve medals and awards in a range of sporting events appropriate to their current level of skills. They actively participated in fundraising events for the local hospice. The school had achieved Level 2 accreditation as a Health Promoting School and a few pupils had participated in the health promoting fortnight at Deerpark Primary School.

Communication and Language

The overall quality of communication and language was very good. Almost all pupils, with appropriate levels of support, achieved very well in targets set in communication and language in their individualised educational programmes (IEPs). Speech and language therapists worked very effectively in partnership with class teams to support pupils' achievements. In all classes, pupils responded well to staff and others. They were able to communicate and convey their feelings in a variety of ways including expressive responses, body language and eye-pointing. Where appropriate, pupils made effective use of pictures, signs and symbols as well as spoken language to express their needs and communicate with others. Some pupils made good use of their communication books when making their choices known to adults at meal or snack times and in the course of outings. They participated well in songs and rhymes in groups and showed a good level of understanding through their positive responses. Where relevant, staff stimulated pupils' interest in reading and writing. A few pupils were successfully developing their early reading and writing skills. A few pupils were able to read unfamiliar texts and compile their own lists. ICT was used well to support aspects of language such as spelling.

Understanding and relating to the environment

The quality of pupils' achievements in understanding and relating to the environment was good. All pupils were making steady progress towards their individual targets. At all stages, pupils were developing a good awareness of number and time. They made effective use of symbols to demonstrate the sequence of the day and some pupils could use clocks to tell the time. Most pupils had an understanding of money and could identify and match coins. Senior pupils were making good progress in identifying appropriate coins to pay for goods during regular visits to local shops. They demonstrated awareness of measurement during baking and cooking activities. Across the school, most pupils had a sound awareness of the different seasons and annual festivals such as birthdays and Easter. Through a whole school topic on China, pupils were developing an understanding of life in another place.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school had met the changing nature of pupils' additional support needs well. Staff had devised clear IEPs for all pupils with targets in communication and language, URE and PSHE. For a few pupils, staff used a good range of multisensory approaches to promote their engagement and understanding of the world around them. Staff used a variety of communication approaches effectively to support pupils' learning, including signs and symbols and ICT. Pupils were very well supported through well-judged individual support from teachers, supervisory assistants and a number of specialist staff who worked together well in the classroom. A range of visiting specialists made very good contributions to helping pupils achieve their individual learning targets. The visiting music therapist effectively contributed to supporting pupils' emotional well-being. Multi-agency working was a strength within the school. Appropriate coordinated support plans (CSP) were in place. Regular reviews of CSPs involving parents, appropriate agencies, and pupils where appropriate, contributed to very effective support for their additional support needs. A very small number of pupils with autism spectrum disorders were supported by VBA workers. However, these pupils required a greater degree of challenge and did not always experience the range of school activities which would help to maximise their progress.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	The school had very effective arrangements to ensure pupils' care and welfare. It had a range of appropriate policies relating to pastoral care that were clear and implemented consistently. Staff had received suitable training on child protection issues. All members of staff focused well on pupils' emotional, physical and social needs. They had established a happy, positive and supportive climate and dealt sensitively with pupils' needs. Pupils responded well to the high levels of care and attention and felt secure and valued. The school promoted health and wellbeing across all aspects of school life, including healthy eating at snack and lunch times and through activities such as skiing and horse riding. The link educational psychologist and Home School Link Officer also made significant contributions to supporting parents and pupils.

Aspect	Comment
<p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p>	<p>Overall the management and use of resources and space for learning was adequate. Most of the school offered an attractive environment for learning. Most classrooms were bright and well organised and pupils' achievements were attractively displayed. The school had recently been refurbished. Staff made good use of breakout rooms including the soft play room and sensory room. However, features such as the steeply sloping corridor and springs on doors made accessibility difficult for those with restricted mobility. The quiet areas adjacent to some classes were used to store equipment which limited the space available for learning. There was no window to the outside in the classroom used by the VBA workers. Security arrangements were appropriate.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>Across the school relationships amongst staff and pupils were very good. They worked very well in teams and morale was high. Pupils were treated with care and respect. At lunch time, staff had created a warm and nurturing learning environment. Staff responded well to recently extended opportunities to contribute to school improvements. All staff had suitably high expectations of pupils' behaviour and levels of independence. Almost all pupils had a high degree of challenge. Staff promoted pupils' independence and provided a wide range of opportunities for pupils to extend their achievements. Consistent and appropriate use of praise in classes, certificates of achievement and school assemblies to celebrate successes further promoted a positive ethos. There were appropriate arrangements for religious observance. Pupils participated in sporting events and had good opportunities to be included in mainstream schools and activities in the local community.</p>

Aspect	Comment
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school was very successful in involving parents and families. All parents were very positive about all aspects of the school. Staff provided very good support with aspects of outstanding practice. For example, the Home School Link Officer provided very effective support to siblings of pupils and holiday clubs to extend children's learning opportunities. The headteacher encouraged partner agencies to work with the school to provide valuable support to children and their families. Fortnightly coffee mornings and workshops provided parents with popular and regular opportunities for learning about the school and consulting with the school's link psychologist and Home School Link Officer. Staff involved parents in agreeing learning targets and helped them take an active role in reviewing their children's progress. They successfully promoted strategies which enabled parents to support their children's learning at home. Staff kept parents well informed about pupils' progress through daily home-school sheets, regular newsletters and parents' evenings. A Parents' Council was being established.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Lochies School provided high quality education within an environment where pupils made good progress in their learning. The caring and supportive staff were committed to pupils' well-being and team work was strong. Staff supported families in appropriate and sensitive ways. Staff regularly celebrated pupils' achievements and encouraged them to become as independent as possible. They developed pupils' personal and social skills, confidence and self-esteem well. Partnership working with parents and a range of support agencies was highly effective. The school was well placed to further improve programmes of study to ensure consistency of challenge to meet the needs of all learners.

The leadership of the headteacher was very good. In her short time in post, she had won the trust and respect of staff, parents and support agency personnel. She had established a strong sense of teamwork and was proactive in enabling other agencies to work well together. The headteacher had set out her vision for the school and shared this with staff and parents. She had set a clear focus on improvements to children's learning experiences through, for example, effective monitoring of learning targets. The headteacher recognised the strengths of teaching and support staff and ensured they had good opportunities to participate in appropriate staff development. She helped staff to reflect on their practice and encouraged innovation. She managed the pace of change effectively and used well-judged approaches to ensure that improvements continued.

The newly appointed deputy headteacher was a highly effective practitioner. Her teaching was a model of best practice. She had provided effective direction and support to the team of supervisory assistants making due use of their talents and skills in allocating them to class teams. Her remit included monitoring classroom practice. However, due to staff absences, she had been fully class committed and had not had enough opportunity to make a full leadership contribution across the school. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher had made a very strong start to enabling staff to contribute as leaders within the school. For example, the Home School Liaison Officer had taken the lead in improvements for parents and siblings. A supervisory assistant had undertaken appropriate training and used this well to help other members of staff to use ICT. In partnership with speech and language therapists, a support worker was developing the use of PECS across the school.

There were a number of important strengths in the school's approaches to self-evaluation. Staff met daily to reflect on learning and teaching. At the end of each term teachers provided a brief evaluation of learning and teaching and the impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher monitored and gave clear feedback on teachers' forward plans. Staff were fully involved in evaluating pupils' progress and demonstrated a good knowledge of pupils' strengths and developmental needs. Staff had successfully taken forward improvements in responding to changes in the pupil population, for example, by improving communication programmes and arrangements for moving and handling children safely and with respect. Staff monitored pupils' progress effectively. All staff had been consulted and involved in the audit and implementation of the school development plan. They were now ready to become more fully involved in the school's approaches to using self-evaluation for improvement.

Main points for action

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:

- continue to improve the curriculum; and
- improve the accommodation.

What happens next?

As a result of the high 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. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Catherine Clark
Managing Inspector

24 June 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
Improvement in performance: Communication and Language	very good
Improvement in performance: Understanding and relating to the environment	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	adequate
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	very good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	very 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
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"> • Staff ensured their children were very well cared for and that if they raised a matter of concern the school would do something about it. • The school encouraged their children to work to the best of their ability. • The school had a good reputation in the community. • The school was well led. 	<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"> • Staff told them when they had done something well and helped them when they had difficulty. • Teachers listened to what they said. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few pupils wanted the school to help them understand what to do if something worried them.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They liked working in the school and there was effective communication between senior managers and staff. • They showed concern for pupils' well-being and pupils' achievements were celebrated. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few staff wanted more opportunities to be involved in contributing to decision-making.

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 Head of Education and Community Learning, 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 8293. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of provision for pupils with additional support needs, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG.

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, Freeport 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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