

**Langlees Primary School
Falkirk Council**

2 September 2003

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Langlees Primary School Falkirk Council

1. Introduction

Langlees Primary School was inspected in April and May 2003 as part of a national sample of primary education. An integrated inspection of the nursery class was carried out by the Care Commission and HMIE at the same time and a separate report published.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, mathematics, and art and design within expressive arts. HM Inspectors also evaluated the impact of the school's new community school (NCS) status.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and pupils, and to all staff. They also met the chairperson of the School Board, staff who provided additional support for pupils and their families through the NCS pilot project, and the NCS integration manager.

2. The school

The school serves the Langlees and New Carron Village areas of Falkirk. At the time of the inspection the roll was 247 including 40 children who attended the nursery class. The education authority had placed 18 pupils in the school's support facility for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There were two classes in the facility covering P1 to P4 and P4 to P7 respectively.

Since 1999 the school had been involved in the NCS pilot project along with Bainsford Primary School. It had benefited from enhanced funding from the government's Excellence Fund Special Programme. The main aims of the project are to promote the social inclusion of pupils and their families, to raise attainment and to promote good health. The pilot project was about to be extended to form an Integrated Learning Community. This would include all the local schools working jointly with other agencies including health, social work and community education.

Parents' views

Over a third of the parents sampled responded to the questionnaire. They were generally satisfied with the work of the school. Almost all thought that:

- their children enjoyed school;
- the school encouraged their children to work to the best of their ability; and
- school buildings were kept in good order.

Some parents felt that the school could deal more effectively with inappropriate behaviour, and that teachers could do more to inform parents about their child's strengths and weaknesses. A few felt that the school could be more effective at consulting them on decisions that affected their children.

Ethos

Pupils identified strongly with the school. They were very friendly and polite, and most were well behaved. They had some opportunities to take part in decisions about the life of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils were generally positive. Staff expectations of pupils' behaviour were good. However, staff needed to have higher expectations of their pupils' learning and attainment. Most staff made effective use of praise to motivate and encourage pupils. There was a sense of equality and fairness throughout the school. Weekly assemblies provided good opportunities to recognise pupils' achievements and to celebrate success. They also provided opportunities for religious observance. Attendance was below national levels but there had been recent improvements in attendance rates.

School and community

The school had good relationships with parents, other schools in the NCS cluster, educational support services and the wider community.

- The School Board provided good support for the school. Members of the parent-teacher association (PTA) worked successfully to raise funds and organise social events.
- Effective links had been established with staff from a range of agencies including the environmental education support officer, speech and language therapists and the visually impaired service.
- The school's links with the wider community had been enhanced by the NCS project. Successful developments included the range of classes available at the community learning centre, a parents' homework support group and a series of well-attended family learning days.
- The school had established good links with the local minister and used a suitable range of methods to communicate with parents.

Accommodation

The quality of accommodation was good. Classrooms were bright and spacious. A modern computer suite and a recently refurbished library provided attractive learning areas. The building was generally well maintained although there were signs of water penetration from roof leaks. The condition of some windows required attention. Partially funded by the NCS pilot project, the school had been extended recently to provide an attractive community library and learning centre, an interview room and additional office accommodation. The large playground provided good grass and hard surface play areas in which pupils were appropriately supervised. There were attractive gardens and a range of outdoor play equipment. An effective security system was in place. A number of health and safety matters were brought to the attention of the headteacher.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed, including very good provision of staff to support pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning or their behaviour. As part of the NCS pilot project, a children and family support worker, an early years support worker and a community education worker worked with the school. The school was very well supported by non-teaching staff.

Overall, the provision of resources was fair. The school had a suitable supply of resources for mathematics but there was a need to extend the range of materials for English language. A wider range of resources was required to support the programmes in art and design, environmental studies and health education. There was a good supply of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment although pupils were not able to use computers regularly because of technical problems. The library was attractive and generally well stocked. There had been some recent improvements in resource organisation. The headteacher had made good use of the limited devolved budget to allow teaching staff to attend special education needs (SEN) staff

development opportunities. She should now ensure that funds were used to target improvements in resources.

3. How well are pupils performing?

English language

In English language, the overall quality of pupils' attainment was fair. The school had made some progress in raising standards of attainment over the last three years, particularly in writing. There was, however, scope for further improvement. Most pupils coped well with their classwork but there was a need for some tasks to be more rigorous and challenging. Most pupils at P1 and P2 were making some progress in developing early literacy skills. In general, the pace of pupils' learning at these stages needed to be increased. From P3-P6, the majority of pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in *listening, talking, reading and writing*. At P7, most pupils were achieving these levels. In reading, a significant number had exceeded them. Pupils generally listened attentively in class and responded well to instructions. They now needed to develop a wider range of skills in listening and talking. Pupils' skills in discussing texts were insufficiently developed. Most were beginning to learn to plan their writing and to write for different purposes. Their skills in redrafting required development. Some pupils across the stages had difficulty with punctuation. Pupils at all stages needed more experience of using computers to help develop and present their writing.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was fair. The school had made steady progress towards improving attainment but there was scope for further improvement. Most pupils in P3, and the majority of pupils in P4-P7, were achieving appropriate national attainment levels in *number, money and measurement, shape, position and movement* and in *information handling*. A significant number of pupils in P7 had exceeded these levels. Attainment was variable at P6. Generally, pupils

performed well in their coursework and were able to carry out written calculations accurately. Their skills in mental calculation were not well developed. Pupils' knowledge of time was good. Across the school, they showed good knowledge of shapes and their properties. Although pupils could interpret graphs well, from P4-P7 they lacked skills in using databases and spreadsheets. In *problem solving and enquiry*, pupils needed to develop a range of strategies for tackling problems.

Art and design

The overall quality of attainment in art and design was fair. Most pupils coped well with the tasks given and had produced some good work. However, the quality of the work produced was too variable overall. Pupils' skills in using a variety of techniques and media had not been developed systematically. At the early stages some pupils were making good progress with their painting skills. At the middle stages pupils had made effective use of colour and tone to capture atmosphere in their winter landscapes. At the upper stages they were able to demonstrate skills in use of printing and collage.

4. How good is the curriculum?

The school provided a broad curriculum and gave a particular focus to pupils' personal and social development. In a number of areas, programmes of study needed to be strengthened to build effectively on pupils' prior learning. The length of the school day for those pupils in the support facility was shorter than that for their peers in mainstream classes. Overall, pupils were receiving fewer hours of teaching and learning time than their peers.

English language

The programme for English language was fair. Teachers provided some appropriate activities for pupils in listening, talking, reading and writing. However, the programme did not give enough attention to the systematic development of pupils' skills. Staff needed to

review approaches to the development of pupils' early literacy skills to ensure appropriate challenge for all. Pupils had insufficient opportunities to read and talk about texts and writers' techniques. A new whole-school approach to the teaching of writing was being developed. This needed to be adopted in a consistent manner at all stages. Staff gave appropriate attention to developing handwriting and spelling skills.

Mathematics

The programme in mathematics was fair. Appropriate attention had been given to developing pupils' skills in number, money and measure and in shape, position and movement. Pupils needed more opportunities to develop skills in mental calculation, particularly at the early stages. They had not used computers to organise and display data. Some recent attention had been given to problem solving but there was a need to develop a structured programme that emphasised the consistent development of appropriate strategies.

Art and Design

The programme in art and design was fair. Although teachers provided some stimulating work for pupils, some tasks did not give sufficient attention to the development of key skills. The headteacher had recently provided helpful advice for teachers. This was not yet being used throughout the school to ensure that all pupils received a broad experience and made appropriate progress. The visiting teacher made a valuable contribution to the programme and supported teachers effectively.

Expressive arts

The programme for expressive arts was fair overall. Visiting specialist teachers of music and physical education made valuable contributions to programmes. There was no whole-school drama programme but class teachers provided some good activities for pupils. Across the expressive arts staff did not yet give sufficient attention to the continuous development of pupils' skills and the attainment levels they were expected to achieve.

5. How good is learning and teaching?

Aspects of teaching were good overall but planning needed to be strengthened. There were some important weaknesses in the quality of pupils' learning and how well their needs were being met. Assessment of pupils' progress needed further development.

- The quality of teachers' planning was fair. Forward plans needed to show more clearly what pupils were expected to learn and how progress would be assessed.
- Most teachers were well organised, gave clear explanations and made good use of praise. They now needed to share the purpose of lessons with pupils more consistently and improve the quality of teacher-pupil interaction.
- In art and design, pupils were well motivated and worked enthusiastically. However, the pace of learning needed to be increased in English language and mathematics to stimulate pupils' interest and help them make good progress in coursework. Pupils needed more opportunities to work and learn collaboratively.
- Staff worked hard to meet pupils' needs and offered additional support when required. In English language and mathematics there was a need to review approaches to meeting pupils' needs in order to raise attainment further. Groups of pupils in some classes needed greater challenge.
- There were weaknesses in the school's arrangements for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress. There had been some recent progress in assessment of pupils' writing. Information gathered about pupils' learning needed to be used to plan next steps in learning. National tests were used to assess pupils'

progress but some pupils were given tests before they were ready.

- Parents were encouraged to share concerns about any aspects of their children's progress and received an annual written report. Reports provided good information about pupils' progress in English language and mathematics but contained insufficient detail about their progress in other curriculum areas.

6. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare

Promoted staff, teachers and ancillary staff provided good levels of support for pupils' care and welfare. They knew their pupils well and responded positively to concerns and difficulties. The school had recently introduced an appropriate anti-bullying policy which had been shared with pupils and parents. Pupils were actively involved in the school's approaches to creating a safe school environment. The school had adopted the education authority's child protection guidelines. There was a need, however, to share fully with parents the school's approaches to all aspects of health education.

Personal and social development

The school's programme for developing pupils' personal and social skills was good. Pupils were generally respectful to each other and to adults. Circle time was used to help develop pupils' self esteem and social skills. The school had developed a range of approaches to encourage and reward positive behaviour. The community education worker based in the school made a very effective contribution to the school's eco-project which encouraged pupils to take action to improve the school's environment. The pupil council gave pupils opportunities to influence decisions about aspects of school life. Older pupils had appropriate opportunities to take responsibility for supporting younger ones, both as playleaders and by acting as buddies. Pupils had access to a good range of extra-curricular activities, both at

lunchtime and after school. The school's health education programme was under review.

Support for learning

School staff, with support from outside agencies, provided good support for pupils who needed additional help with their learning or behaviour. The part-time learning support teacher liaised effectively with class teachers to plan how to meet the needs of individuals and groups. She worked very well with small groups of pupils with learning difficulties and gave very good advice to teaching and some support staff. In addition, the senior teacher (SEN) provided assistance for individuals and groups of pupils. Staff deployed in the school through the NCS project provided effective support for individual pupils and groups in need of additional support. Classroom assistants and support for learning assistants provided valuable support for individual pupils. In general, suitable arrangements were in place to support pupils with behaviour difficulties. Individualised education programmes (IEPs) had been developed for a significant number of pupils and were shared with all relevant staff, as well as with parents. Some progress was being made in developing effective personal learning plans. Overall, pupils were making good progress in meeting their targets. There was, however, a need to ensure that the specific roles and responsibilities of those involved in supporting pupils' learning were clarified and co-ordinated.

Staff in the support facility had established good relationships with their pupils and actively promoted their confidence and self-worth. They knew pupils well and were responsive to their personal, social and learning needs. Within the support facility, they provided a good variety of different tasks and activities to reinforce and enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, they encountered some difficulties in meeting the diverse variety of pupils' needs across the wide age range in each of the facility's classes. The school provided good opportunities for staff in the support facility and teachers

in mainstream classes to share information and plan future activities. All pupils in the support facility had IEPs to help promote their attainment and achievements. There was a need for some targets to be more specific.

The authority had opened Records of Needs for 14 of the 18 pupils in the support facility and 2 pupils in mainstream classes. The school ensured that the progress of all pupils in the support facility was reviewed at least once each year and that there were good opportunities for parents and external support agencies to be involved in this process. Aspects of the management of the Records of Needs of pupils in both mainstream classes and the support facility required to be improved. The education authority should review the needs of those pupils experiencing significant learning difficulties and open a Record of Needs for those with specific or complex special educational needs. It should ensure that documentation relating to pupils, including their Records of Needs, is complete and up-to-date.

7. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher, who had been in post for four years, was committed to the school and its pupils. In that time she had established good relationships with other schools, support agencies and members of the local community. She had placed a strong emphasis on the promotion of pupils' personal and social development and had led the introduction of important improvements in this area. She had involved staff increasingly in developing curriculum policies and had begun to focus more clearly on raising attainment in the school. However, she had not given a clear lead in some important areas such as curriculum development and the quality of pupils' learning. There was a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of members of the senior management team to ensure a clear strategic direction for staff and pupils. Communication

and teamwork within the school needed to be improved further.

The depute headteacher had made a significant contribution to pastoral care in the school. She had effectively managed some key aspects of the NCS pilot project and had helped initiate recent improvements in aspects of teaching in English language. Her remit required to be adjusted to ensure a clearer focus on supporting teachers in class and improving pupils' attainment. The senior teacher (P1-P7) fulfilled her remit well and had recently carried out an effective review of science resources in the school.

The aims of the school were clear and comprehensive. While staff had an increasing involvement in the review and development of school policies, there was a need to ensure consistency of approach in the implementation of these policies in the classroom.

The school recognised that policies and procedures for the support facility should be reviewed with the aim of ensuring that pupils were experiencing a more inclusive education. The aims of the NCS pilot project had not been clear to all those involved. This had resulted in some difficulties with joint working between school, social work and community education staff.

Staff review and development

All permanent teaching staff had been reviewed. Most staff had participated in a suitable range of staff development opportunities. A visiting mentor provided regular and effective support for the two probationary teachers. There was now a need to ensure that staff development was targeted to meet the needs of individual members of staff.

Planning for improvement

The development plan had an appropriate structure and was clearly linked to national priorities. It contained too many priorities to be manageable and did not fully reflect the need to improve the curriculum and the quality of

learning and teaching. The plan did not give sufficient consideration to developing the work of the support facility. Progress in implementing planned developments had been inconsistent. Approaches to planning for improvement were fair overall.

Approaches to improving quality

The school's procedures for monitoring classroom practice had improved significantly this session. Both the headteacher and depute headteacher monitored teachers' forward plans and regularly looked at pupils' jotters and samples of written classwork. The programme for visits to classrooms was shared with staff in advance. This good practice now needed to focus more rigorously on improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences, and on raising attainment. As part of an annual review of progress, staff made some good use of quality indicators to evaluate the work of the school.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

Langlees Primary School offered its pupils a broad curriculum. Arrangements to support pupils who required additional help were generally effective. There had been some recent improvement in pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics. However, there were weaknesses in a number of key areas which required to be addressed. The senior management team needed to focus more clearly on improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences and on raising attainment.

The NCS pilot project had enhanced the school's provision in a number of areas. However, difficulties with joint working between school and NCS staff had meant that the opportunities provided by the project had not been exploited fully. Recent improvements in relationships should now be built on to ensure the school and its community benefited from the new Integrated Learning Community initiative.

Key strengths

- The school's polite and friendly pupils.
- The level and quality of the support provided for pupils who required additional support for learning.
- The very good provision of staffing in the school.
- The high quality of much of the accommodation and facilities within the school.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- The school should improve programmes of study in line with the recommendations in this report.
- The school should improve its arrangements for assessing pupils' progress to provide clearer information on their attainment and to inform future planning of teaching and learning.
- The senior management team and class teachers should ensure that the pace of lessons is increased and that pupils are challenged more consistently.
- The senior management team, with support from the education authority and in partnership with all staff, should review the school development plan. There should be a particular focus on the Integrated Community initiative and developing strategies to improve standards of attainment.
- The length of time pupils in the support facility spend in school should be increased in line with that of their peers in the primary school.
- The education authority should review the needs of those pupils experiencing significant learning difficulties and ensure that documentation relating to

pupils, including their Records of Needs, is complete and up-to-date.

The school and the education authority will prepare an action plan indicating how the main findings of the report will be addressed. The action plan will be shared with parents and carers. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, 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 another report to parents and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Peter McNaughton
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Eastern Division

2 September 2003

See Quality Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- Staffing

We judged the following to be *good*

- Climate and Relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Accommodation and Facilities
- School management of finances
- The Teaching Process
- Reporting pupils' progress
- Learning Support
- Self-evaluation
- Staff Review and Development

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Provision of resources
- Structure of the Curriculum
- Courses and Programmes
- Teachers' Planning
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Assessment as part of teaching
- Implementation of legislation relating to SEN and disabilities
- Leadership
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Planning for improvement

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Quality of lessons observed

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 3% of cases, good in 61% and fair in 36%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

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, Eastern Division, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8437. Copies are also available on our web site: 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 Dr Gill Robinson, HMCI at the above address. 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.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

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