

**Laurieston Primary School  
Falkirk Council**

**7 October 2003**

# Contents

---

1.	Introduction	Page 1
2.	The school	1
3.	How well are pupils performing?	5
4.	How good is the curriculum?	6
5.	How good is learning and teaching?	8
6.	How well are pupils supported?	9
7.	How well is the school managed?	11
8.	How well does the school perform overall?	13
	Key strengths	
	Main points for action	
	Appendix	16-17
	Indicators of quality	
	Quality of lessons observed	
	How can you contact us?	18

---

# Inspection of Standards and Quality in Laurieston Primary School Falkirk Council

## 1. Introduction

Laurieston Primary School was inspected in May 2003 as part of a national sample of primary education. An integrated inspection of the nursery provision 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 social subjects within environmental studies.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to samples of parents and pupils, and to all staff. A member of the inspection team also met the Chairperson of the School Board.

## 2. The school

The school serves the village of Laurieston. At the time of the inspection the primary school roll was 252.

## **Parents' views**

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were generally very satisfied with the work of the school. Almost all thought that:

- their children enjoyed school and found work stimulating and challenging, and that teachers set high standards;
- parents were made to feel welcome in the school, and were given helpful information about their children's progress;
- staff treated children fairly, showed concern for the care and welfare of children and responded to parental concerns; and
- the school had a good reputation in the community and was well led.

## **Ethos**

The quality of the school's climate and relationships was very good. The school provided a welcoming, friendly, and secure environment. Pupils responded well in class, were well-behaved and polite, and demonstrated pride in their school. Staff had appropriately high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitude towards work. They used praise well in classes and had developed a good range of approaches to encourage and motivate pupils. These included awarding certificates for achievement, displaying examples of pupils' best work and celebrating success in school assemblies. The school was aware of the need to raise further some pupils' expectations of themselves. There were plans to involve pupils more in evaluating their own performance, and to develop better systems to track progress and set pupils achievable targets.

The school had a good range of approaches to promote equality and fairness. Pupils felt safe in the school and were treated fairly by staff. The school's programme for religious and moral education had been reviewed to

highlight the importance of other world religions. However, the school needed to put more emphasis on building up progressively pupils' understanding of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. Weekly assemblies, which regularly involved the school chaplain, let the school gather as a community and gave opportunities for religious observance. Attendance at school was in line with national levels.

## **School and community**

The school had established very good links with parents, other schools, educational support services and the wider community.

- The School Board was supportive and was kept well informed by the headteacher and depute headteacher.
- A parent-teacher association had been active in organising a range of activities and in raising school funds. A number of parents contributed well to a range of school activities, including helping in classes at the early stages, school excursions and after-school activities.
- The school kept parents well informed through informative newsletters, leaflets and parents' evenings.
- The transfer arrangements for pupils entering P1 from the nursery class were very well organised.
- The school had collaborated well with other cluster primary schools and participated in a very strong induction programme for P7 pupils transferring to Graeme High School.
- The school benefited from a well-established educational link with British Petroleum.
- The school received good support from external agencies including community police and a range of council services.

**Accommodation**

The school building, which was secure and well-maintained, provided a pleasant environment for learning. Some rooms had recently been refurbished and public areas had been further enhanced with stimulating displays of pupils' work. However, storage space was limited and the library, computer suite and learning support base were located in the same room. The playground had tarmac and grassed areas providing suitable facilities for play and some sports.

**Staffing and resources**

The school was very well staffed. There was a good balance of experience amongst teachers, an appropriate level of staffing for learning support and helpful input from several specialist visiting teachers. The deputy headteacher had no full-time responsibility for a class this session. Pupils also benefited from a very good level of auxiliary and classroom-assistant support in classes. The school was well supported by secretarial, janitorial and catering staff.

The overall level of resourcing was good. Materials, equipment and textbooks were in good supply although the organisation and accessibility of some stocks needed to be improved. Good use was made of a suite of computers. All classes had regular timetabled lessons to develop pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) and they were able to make independent use of computers for word-processing and research. The headteacher had made appropriate use of available finance to extend library provision on acquire up-to-date resources in several curricular areas, including English language, music, science and citizenship.

### 3. How well are pupils performing?

#### English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was fair. Pupils' levels of attainment had improved over the previous three years. Almost all pupils at the early stages and most at the middle and upper stages performed well in their coursework, although some would have benefited from greater challenge. Pupils generally listened attentively in class, but were not sufficiently skilled in discussing their views with each other. While most enjoyed reading, they had limited skills in reflecting on the books they had read. In most classes, writing was well presented, and spelling and punctuation were generally accurate. However, at the upper stages, pupils did not develop their ideas and expression sufficiently within a range of contexts. There was no reliable evidence of pupils' performance in *listening* and *talking*. Almost all pupils at the early stages achieved or exceeded minimum national levels of attainment in *reading* and *writing*. On the evidence available, most achieved appropriate levels in reading at the middle and upper stages. In writing, the evidence available indicated that most at the middle stages and a majority at the upper stages, attained appropriate levels. However, at P7, less than half achieved these levels.

#### Mathematics

In mathematics, the overall quality of pupils' attainment was good. In P1 and P2, pupils were making good progress in developing an appropriate range of mathematical skills including basic arithmetic. Most pupils from P3 to P6 and a majority at P7 were attaining in line with appropriate minimum national levels in *information handling, number, money and measurement, and shape, position and movement*. From P2 to P7, some pupils were attaining levels well ahead of national expectations. Pupils were good at interpreting information from graphs, but had not developed skills in using computers to analyse data. They were developing a good range of skills in written calculation and, at the upper stages, more able pupils showed a very good

understanding of the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages. However, some pupils lacked confidence in mental calculation. Most pupils had a good understanding of the properties of two and three dimensional shapes. At all stages, pupils had some experience of solving problems but their skills in problem solving and enquiry required more systematic development.

### **Social subjects**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in social subjects was good. At most stages, pupils achieved well in their work in class. They were knowledgeable about what life was like in the historical periods they had studied. Pupils could identify sources of information in history, and at the upper stages they could identify those which were most reliable. Pupils at all stages displayed a good knowledge of the geography of the local area. They had an appropriate level of skill in using maps, and could identify significant physical features of the world. Pupils at all stages had a good understanding of rights and responsibilities in relation to other people. At P1 they could talk about their own responsibilities at home. P4 pupils understood what it meant to be elected to represent the views of others. P6 pupils were able to talk about the different levels of representation, from local councils to European Parliament, and describe some of their functions. At all stages, pupils' skills in investigation and in recording and presenting their work needed further development.

## **4. How good is the curriculum?**

The curriculum was of good quality. Class timetables were broad and well balanced throughout the school. Pupils at P6 and P7 were learning French. In P1 and P2, teachers were implementing early intervention approaches in English language and mathematics well. Programmes of study were in the process of review in several curricular areas and generally needed further

development to give staff clearer guidance on key learning outcomes and ensure progression from stage to stage.

### **English language**

The programme for English language had some major weaknesses. There were no whole school programmes for listening, talking and writing. Learning and teaching activities did not cover an appropriate range of skills and contexts. The programme for reading provided well for reading for enjoyment and reading aloud, but did not cover other aspects in sufficient depth. The school had taken effective steps to improve the programmes for reading and writing at the early stages. There was no guidance for teachers on ensuring progression in pupils' learning as they moved from stage to stage.

### **Mathematics**

The mathematics programme was of good quality and was being reviewed to improve the pace and quality of pupils' learning. From P1 to P3, pupils developed mathematical concepts through an appropriate range of practical activity and discussion. From P4 to P7, the programme put a good emphasis on written calculation and teachers gave pupils regular opportunities to practice skills in mental calculation. The programme needed further development to improve the progression in mental strategies from stage to stage. The teaching of information handling put a good emphasis on developing pupils' interpretation skills but needed to give them more experience of gathering and organising information using computers. Class programmes also need to include problem-solving sessions more regularly to allow better progression in the development of a wider range of strategies.

### **Social Subjects**

The programme in social subjects was fair. It provided opportunities for pupils to study an appropriate variety and range of topics. The topics covered appropriate themes, and gave pupils opportunities to learn about the history and geography of Scotland and develop comparisons with other countries and civilisations.

Pupils also learned about representative bodies at a local, national and European level. However, the programme only indicated the broad outline of the topics to be covered at each stage. There was not sufficient guidance in the programme, or enough detail in topic plans to enable teachers to build progressively on pupils' previous learning. The programme gave insufficient attention to the development of skills in investigation, and in presenting topic work.

## **Environmental studies**

The overall programme for environmental studies was fair. It provided a range of topics for study at each stage, which gave opportunities for learning in social subjects, science and technology. Good use was made of the local area for visits and fieldwork. However, more detailed planning was required to ensure that pupils had well-structured teaching and learning opportunities which ensured progression in all aspects of environmental studies.

## **5. How good is learning and teaching?**

The overall quality of teaching was good with particularly strong interactive teaching in P1-P3. Pupils generally responded well in class, although from P4 to P7 they required more challenging activities which required them to think independently and participate actively in lessons.

- Teachers planned their work carefully in each curriculum area. Generally, forward plans needed to give more detail about how learning outcomes would be achieved, how learning experiences would take account of prior learning and how key skills would be assessed.
- Most teachers were skilled in direct teaching to classes and groups. Lessons were generally

well-paced. Teachers set homework regularly but needed to extend the range of homework tasks to provide greater interest and challenge for pupils.

- Teachers gave clear explanations and used questioning well to check pupils' understanding. Although classroom assistants helped individual pupils cope with specific tasks, from P4 to P7 the level of work was not always well matched to the needs of all pupils. In some classes, questions and learning activities needed to be more challenging and more opportunities provided for pupils to work independently.
- Teachers regularly assessed pupils' work in aspects of mathematics and, in English language and mathematics, used national tests to confirm progress. However, there were major weaknesses in the assessment of pupils' writing and pupils' performance in listening and talking was not assessed. Although teachers had a good informal knowledge of individual pupils' attainment across the curriculum, approaches to assessing pupils' work and recording progress needed further development.
- Written reports to parents were of good quality. They gave a helpful level of detail on pupils' strengths but some teachers needed to give more information on next steps in pupils' learning.

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

### **Care and welfare**

The school provided good support for the care and welfare of pupils. Pupils had a good understanding of the school's procedures for dealing with occasional instances of bullying and the school had developed appropriate arrangements to enable pupils to raise any matters of concern. They were supervised carefully at intervals and at lunchtime. Staff knew pupils well and shared this

knowledge to enable the school to respond effectively to pupils' physical and emotional needs. The school's arrangements for dealing with incidents relating to child protection, racism and health and safety worked well in practice. Staff needed clearer written guidance to raise their awareness and to give details of the exact procedures to be followed.

### **Personal and social development**

The school's programme for developing pupils' personal and social skills was of very good quality. Regular "circle time" gave pupils good opportunities to discuss feelings and share opinions. The school's health education programme paid due attention to aspects of safety, personal relationships, hygiene and drugs. It was being further developed to improve progression from stage to stage and there were plans to keep parents fully informed about the new programme. Older pupils took on a good range of appropriate responsibilities. These included helping younger children through paired reading and monitoring playground behaviour. An active pupil council had influenced several aspects of the day-to-day organisation of school activities including playground games and litter collection. Pupils also co-operated with each other through participation in a good range of after-school sporting and musical activities. P7 pupils developed their social skills through a valuable residential experience.

### **Support for learning**

The overall quality of support for learning was good. The part-time learning support teacher provided support, through sound and systematic teaching of English language, to individuals and small groups of pupils. She also provided some support in class, but this needed to be extended in partnership with class teachers to become more integrated into the work of the class, and to cover a broader range of curricular areas. Individualised educational programmes were well-drawn up, but the school should now involve pupils more directly in identifying appropriate targets.

Staff were well-informed about their responsibilities for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Arrangements for pupils with Records of Need were very well-managed. Pupils with special educational needs were given good support for transfer to secondary school. Arrangements for working with other services, including the educational psychology service, were good.

## **7. How well is the school managed?**

### **Overall management and leadership**

In his 11 years in post, the headteacher had successfully established a positive ethos within which pupils could work securely and purposefully and experience a good range of extra-curricular activities. He had also established strong and productive relationships with parents and the wider community. However, he needed to give a stronger lead to staff, particularly from P4-P7, about the content of curricular programmes, learning and teaching approaches and the assessment of pupils' performance. The overall effectiveness of leadership was fair. The deputy headteacher, who was in her second year in post, provided the headteacher with very effective support. She had introduced a number of new teaching approaches in P1-P3 and, encouraged by the headteacher, had improved practice throughout the school, particularly in celebrating pupils' achievements and staff development. A senior teacher made a very effective contribution to developing the use of ICT throughout the school. Another senior teacher was on sick leave at the time of the inspection.

The school's aims were appropriate and provided a suitable basis for the work of the school. Staff had collaborated in reviewing some policies, most recently for religious and moral education, taking good account of education authority advice where appropriate. However, several key school policies and curriculum programmes were in need of further development and up-dating. The school was currently taking a lead role within a local

cluster of schools in developing a joint programme for health education.

### **Staff review and development**

The school had made good use of staff development time to enable staff to contribute to priorities in its development plan. Staff had attended several education authority courses and some had visited other schools to observe good practice. Whole-school staff development had covered a range of relevant aspects including new approaches to teaching reading and writing, behaviour management and the use of ICT. Teaching staff were all participating in the education authority's programme of staff review.

### **Planning for improvement**

The development plan was well-structured and included a detailed audit of progress with the previous plan. However, although progress with most identified priorities had been good, the planning process had important weaknesses. The plan did not cover some of the most important initiatives actually underway in the school, such as developments in the programme for English language and changing approaches to learning and teaching at the early stages. In addition, links between the audit process and the plan were unclear with some areas identified as in need of attention, such as assessment, not being addressed in the current plan nor in the three year overview. Overall, the impact of the planning process on the quality of pupils' learning experience was limited.

### **Approaches to improving quality**

The school had a number of systems in place for self-evaluation. Senior promoted staff systematically examined samples of pupils' work each term and gave staff written feedback. They also observed lessons and shared views about learning and teaching approaches with staff. Forward plans were regularly examined and constructive feedback provided to teachers. Teachers annually used quality indicators to audit the work of the school and, at the early stages, teachers regularly evaluated the success of class programmes and made use

of this in planning further work. Despite this range of approaches to monitoring its work, the school's approach to self evaluation had important weaknesses. Some teachers were not sufficiently involved in evaluating class programmes and in identifying priorities for improvement. The quality of senior management evaluations varied with some lacking rigour. There was not enough focus on the quality of pupils' learning experiences and insufficient assessment information to allow evaluations to take full account of pupils' attainments.

## **8. How well does the school perform overall?**

Laurieston Primary School provided a good quality of education within a friendly and secure environment. The headteacher and staff were committed to the welfare of pupils and worked hard to ensure that they enjoyed and benefited from their education. The school had established strong links with parents and the community. Pupils were well behaved and worked purposefully in class where the standard of their work was overall good. New approaches to learning and teaching were being introduced successfully from P1 to P3 and were beginning to influence practice at the middle and upper stages. The school now needed to build upon improvements in the early years by further developing programmes of work and approaches to assessment throughout the school. This should ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning from stage to stage and enable all pupils to experience a stimulating and challenging educational experience.

### **Key strengths**

- The school's friendly and positive atmosphere and links with parents and the community.
- Hard-working staff committed to the well-being and education of pupils.

- The good behaviour of pupils and their willingness to respond positively to staff's expectations.
- The very good range of effective transition arrangements for pupils moving to Graeme High School.
- The improving quality of pupils' learning experiences and attainment at the early stages.

**Main points for action**

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

- The school should improve the quality of programmes in the subjects inspected as indicated in the text. Teachers should raise levels of pupils' attainment, particularly in writing, listening and talking.
- The school should continue to strengthen forward planning and teachers should more clearly identify learning outcomes and how these will be achieved and assessed.
- Teachers should be given clearer guidance on the content of programmes of work across the curriculum. Better use should be made of assessment information to ensure all pupils' needs are being met well.
- Senior staff should involve teachers more in evaluating learning and teaching and pupils' progress, and in identifying priorities for improvement.

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. 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 and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Grant Mathison  
HM Inspector  
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector

7 October 2003

See Quality Indicator data overleaf.

# Appendix

## Indicators of quality

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

- Climate and relationships
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Staffing
- Implementation of legislation relating to SEN and disabilities
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities

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

- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Accommodation and facilities
- Provision of resources
- School management of finances
- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Reporting pupils' progress
- Learning support
- Staff review and development

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

- Courses and programmes
- Teachers' planning
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Assessment as part of teaching
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation
- 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 21% of cases, good in 68% and fair in 11%. 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](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.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Professor Alice Brown  
The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman  
23 Walker Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7HX

Telephone number: 0870 011 5378

e-mail: [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk)

More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website:

[www.ombudsmanscotland.org.uk](http://www.ombudsmanscotland.org.uk)

Crown Copyright 2003

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.