

**Newington Primary School
Annan
Dumfries and Galloway Council
1 May 2007**

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1. Background

Newington Primary School was inspected in January and February 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, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

The school serves part of the town of Annan. At the time of the inspection the roll was 449, including 76 children in the nursery class and 11 in the learning centre for pupils with additional support needs. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Consistently well planned teaching.
- Enthusiasm and good behaviour on the part of pupils.
- Improving attainment trends in English language and mathematics.
- The inclusive ethos of the school, including highly effective pastoral care and support for pupils with additional support needs.
- Strong staff teamwork.
- Effective leadership from the headteacher and the senior management team.

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.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

Parents, pupils and staff were very positive about all aspects of the school. Parents were pleased with its leadership, high reputation and the quality of education and pastoral care it provided. They felt welcome within the school and appreciated the information they received about their children's progress. Pupils were also positive about their school and its teachers. They felt safe and well looked after. They had confidence in their teachers and about the way the school would respond to any concerns they had. Staff liked the school and felt valued as part of a well organised team. They were particularly positive about communication and teamwork within the school, and the leadership of the headteacher and senior management team.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall structure of the curriculum was good. It was broad, balanced and well organised. Time was well used to support the continued raising of attainment in English language and mathematics. There were systematic arrangements in place to ensure that teachers built on pupils' progress from stage to stage. The curriculum was enhanced by direct experience of the environment, school trips, enterprise activities and residential experiences. The school was building up its capacity to offer two hours of physical activity per week, within the constraints of the available facilities. The learning centre gave very good attention to pupils' personal and social development, particularly the building up of practical life skills. More emphasis was now needed on encouraging pupils' creativity and capacity to think independently, and on increasing the amount of active learning through play at the early stages. Teaching was very well prepared and thorough. At all stages, the varied approaches included individual, group and class teaching, with particularly effective use of paired discussion among pupils. Teachers consistently ensured pupils were clear about what they were going to learn and drew together the key points of lessons well. Questioning was well judged in checking pupils' understanding. Homework was well organised and appropriate.

Pupils were highly motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. They responded well to lessons, particularly the opportunities for discussion, and were prepared to contribute their ideas and opinions. From the early stages, they were capable of learning on their own and concentrated purposefully on the task they were set. In most classes, the pace of learning was steady and time was used productively. Pupils used information and communications technology (ICT) independently, particularly in mathematics, but there was scope to extend its use in accessing information. At the middle and upper stages, higher attaining pupils were capable of taking more responsibility for their learning.

The school took good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Many were involved in a range of sporting and musical activities and after school clubs. The school choir was very successful and performed for the community on a regular basis. Pupils responded well to the opportunities for teamwork and developing their organisational skills. Many supported the school Burns supper and performed with distinction. The house captains and vice captains group were representing their fellow pupils well in making important suggestions about improving the life of the school, as was the Eco Group and the nutrition action group. The system of monitors, class representatives and pupil helpers ensured that many pupils became aware of their responsibilities for helping each other.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Attainment had improved consistently over the last few years. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. At the early stages, many were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress from their earlier levels of attainment. Pupils at all stages listened well for information and to instructions. They were articulate and were able to participate in discussions, convey information and express their opinions. Pupils throughout the school were responding very well to the school's initiatives to encourage wider reading. They were interested in books and were able to talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors. Most read accurately and with comprehension. A few at the middle and upper stages needed better strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words. Pupils at all stages were capable of writing for a range of purposes and were responding well to very good feedback on how to improve their writing. The quality of imaginative writing needed further development.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Attainment had improved consistently over the last few years. Across the school, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. At the early stages, many pupils were achieving national levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress from their earlier levels of attainment. In some classes, activities did not always challenge higher attaining pupils enough. Across the school, pupils confidently interpreted information from a wide range of tables, graphs and charts. By P7, pupils could organise and present information using a variety of graphs. They were beginning to use ICT to support their learning about spreadsheets. Pupils at P1 made a good start to the development of their early mathematical skills. At most stages, pupils performed mental calculations daily. They were competent in working with measurement, time and money. Pupils at P7 were confident in working with decimals, fractions and percentages. At all stages, pupils had a good understanding of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They were developing effective skills in problem-solving and enquiry and could discuss appropriate strategies with confidence.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school met the range of pupils' needs well overall. Lessons were carefully planned to consider the needs of the full range of pupils. Lower attaining pupils benefited from appropriate materials and tasks and from individual support from teachers and classroom assistants. Tasks for higher attaining pupils did not always provide enough challenge. The school had very effective approaches to identifying and helping pupils with additional support needs. The temporary support for learning teacher worked closely with teachers to provide good support for individuals and groups. She provided helpful professional advice to teachers and support staff. Staff used individualised educational plans (IEPs) successfully to provide realistic learning targets for individuals with additional support needs. The school had established very good links with other support agencies and

professionals, including close working relationships with the speech and language therapy service and the visual impairment teacher. Staff in the learning centre provided well judged tasks and activities for pupils. They reflected real life contexts and ensured appropriate challenge for all. Parents of pupils in the learning centre were actively involved in developing IEPs for their children. They had regular opportunities to comment on their children's progress in achieving their learning targets. Pupils in the learning centre had many opportunities throughout the week to join mainstream classes. The school and learning centre had implemented well-planned induction programmes for pupils with additional support needs moving from nursery to P1, and from P7 to secondary school. Support for learning assistants provided very effective support for pupils. There were good links with families to support and improve levels of attendance.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The quality of pastoral care in the school was very good. Staff were sensitive to pupils' physical, social and emotional needs. The school had implemented successfully a detailed care and welfare policy, which included clearly stated procedures for the protection of children and other aspects of pupil safety. Staff had received a high level of training in child protection. Pupils felt safe in the school. They were familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with instances of bullying. Staff responded quickly to any such instances and to inappropriate behaviour. The buddy bench and playground supporters for younger pupils were encouraging responsible and caring attitudes towards each other. Pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to their health and well-being through regular physical exercise, and participation in the varied out of school hours clubs and activities. Staff successfully encouraged healthy eating and pupils enjoyed the regular fruit tuck shop. Pupils were well informed and knowledgeable about personal safety, relationships and substance misuse. Pupils in the learning centre were clearly happy and settled within their positive and supportive learning environment. There were suitable transition procedures from the nursery to P1 and from the primary school to Annan Academy.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of the accommodation and facilities was good. Positive features such as the hall/gymnasium, dining area and ICT suite were used well for the benefit of pupils. Some classrooms were cramped for current class sizes. Staff made good use of the limited space and facilities within the learning centre. The display policy, which included a pupils' art gallery, was very well used to reinforce positive behaviour and to instil pride in the school and its activities. The school had appropriate entrance security arrangements and access for people with disabilities. There were good grass and tarmac play areas. Pupils had been involved in the design of a sensory garden and a Scottish-themed garden, and were currently planning a wildlife garden.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Relationships between staff and pupils were very positive. Pupils were proud of their school and pleased to identify with it. Staff morale was also high as a consequence of the well developed teamwork. They encouraged pupils and had high expectations of their work and behaviour. Pupils had been involved in the development of the school's code of conduct and behaved very well. Assemblies and the well developed house system were used to encourage positive behaviour and acknowledge achievement. There were appropriate arrangements for religious observance. The school placed sustained emphasis on encouraging a sense of equality, fairness and concern for others. This was reinforced continuously by staff throughout the school. Pupils with additional support needs were included fully in the life of the school. There was a clear race equality policy, which had been supported by appropriate staff development. The school had recently completed a review of its religious and moral education programme, and was well placed to extend its emphasis on promoting cultural diversity to other aspects of the curriculum.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had very good links with parents and the wider community. Parents were made welcome in the school. The senior management team and other staff were approachable and responsive to the concerns of parents and needs of children. Parents felt that issues raised were dealt with timeously and sensitively. The School Board was proactive in support of the school, particularly in relation to maintenance issues. The PTA offered further valuable support for the school and its activities. There were good arrangements for communicating with parents, including comprehensive progress reports, regular newsletters and other circulars about school arrangements. Parents were consulted appropriately on sensitive health issues. The school was developing a dedicated website to improve its communication with parents and the wider community about the curriculum and school activities. The school had forged strong links with the local church, a wide range of sporting and cultural organisations in the community and a number of local businesses. There were appropriate links with Annan Academy and other primary schools in the local cluster.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Newington Primary School served its pupils very well. Its ethos was positive, particularly the good relationships between staff and pupils. Staff worked well as a team. Teaching was very well organised and consistent in its quality. Arrangements for pastoral care were strong. Pupils with additional support needs, including those in the school's learning centre, were well supported. Levels of attainment in English language and mathematics were steadily improving.

The headteacher provided the school with strong visible leadership and a clear sense of direction. He was highly committed to the school and its pupils. He had a detailed knowledge of the school, pride in its strengths and a clear view of its priorities for improvement. Through leading by example and by setting high standards, he had been successful in generating very good staff teamwork and a common sense of purpose. He was very well supported by the senior management team of depute headteachers and the principal teacher with responsibility for additional support needs, each of whom fulfilled their roles with a high degree of commitment. The team was seen by staff as accessible and supportive. The collective impact of the headteacher and the senior management team had been reflected in the improving attainment trends, the consistency of approaches to teaching and the very positive environment for learning.

There was a suitable range of strategies for monitoring whole school developments and pupil progress, including direct monitoring of planning and pupils' work and observation of teaching. Staff were provided with constructive feedback. The senior management team worked in classes on a regular, systematic basis to offer support and leadership for learning. There was an appropriate system for tracking the progress of pupils in relation to national assessments in English language and mathematics. The school standards and quality report was accurate and clear. Staff had been involved in identifying and implementing priorities in the school improvement plan and of developing a culture of self-evaluation throughout the school. The efforts of the senior management team had had a clear and beneficial impact on improving teaching and classroom organisation. To maintain the momentum for improvement, they now needed to focus more directly on challenging learning for higher attaining pupils and on the encouragement of pupils' creativity and independence.

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:

- extend the opportunities for pupils to think and learn independently;
- ensure that learning activities offer increased challenge for higher attaining pupils; and
- extend opportunities within the curriculum for creativity and personal expression.

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.

Lachlan MacCallum
HM Inspector

1 May 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	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

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

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Leadership across the school	very good
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"> • Teachers made them feel welcome in the school and gave them good information about their children's progress. • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • Staff set high standards. • Any concerns they had would be dealt with effectively. • 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"> • They felt safe and well looked after. • Teachers explained things clearly and gave them encouragement and help. • The school would deal effectively with concerns they had. • They had a say in making the school better. • Teachers listened to them. • They enjoyed being at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was good communication between senior managers and staff. • Senior managers worked well as a team. • There was effective communication among staff. • Continuous professional development was productive. • There was mutual respect between staff and pupils. • The school was well led. • They liked working in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

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 Corporate Director of Education and Community Services, 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 8426. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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