

**Haldane Primary School  
Balloch  
West Dunbartonshire Council  
2 September 2008**

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## 1. Background

Haldane Primary School was inspected in May 2008 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 Parent Council, a group of parents<sup>1</sup> and representatives of the local community with links to the school. The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school serves the Haldane area of the small town of Balloch. At the time of the inspection the roll was 134. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. At the time of the inspection, as part of a national initiative, all pupils in P1 to P3 received a free school meal. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Caring, supportive ethos created by staff across the school.
- Effective partnership working to support vulnerable children and their families.
- Strong commitment of the headteacher and staff to improving the quality of learning experiences offered to pupils.
- Motivated and well mannered pupils.

## 3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents were very positive about the work of the school and believed it had a good reputation within the community. They valued the care and concern shown by staff.

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

They were happy with the quality of information they received about their children's progress in reports and at parents' evenings. They believed that their children were encouraged to work to the best of their ability. A few parents had concerns about the condition of the school building. Pupils enjoyed being at school. They felt that teachers explained things well and were good at letting them know how to improve their work. Most pupils felt that the school was good at dealing with bullying. Staff enjoyed working in the school and were very positive about the leadership of the new headteacher. They felt communication within the school was effective and that they were included in the decision making processes.

#### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

##### **Learners' experiences**

The overall quality of the curriculum was satisfactory. Teachers provided a broad curriculum and had recently extended the use of the local environment to enhance pupils' learning experiences. For example, pupils at P4 were involved in the Forest School Project. At the early stages, teachers had begun to provide more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning through planned play activities. Visiting specialists provided good support to deliver music and German in the curriculum. Recently enhanced provision was helping pupils to improve their skills in information and communications technology (ICT). An effective health education programme was in place and pupils' health and wellbeing was benefitting from two hours of physical education each week. Aspects of the curriculum had been updated and a new approach to developing writing had recently been introduced. However, across the school, pupils did not yet have sufficient opportunities for imaginative cross-curricular work and they had limited opportunities to develop their skills in enterprise education and citizenship. Use of additional time to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills had not, as yet, resulted in improvements to pupils' attainment. The quality of teaching was good. Teachers had good interactions with pupils, using praise to encourage and motivate them. They used a range of approaches to engage pupils in their learning. They were developing their use of ICT to support and enhance their teaching. In a majority of lessons, teachers shared the purpose of the learning and gave clear explanations and instructions. Teachers carefully planned their lessons, but they did not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to be active in their learning.

Overall, learners' experiences were satisfactory. Most pupils were motivated and keen to learn. When given the opportunity, they actively engaged in progressing their skills. For example, a small group of senior pupils eagerly learned the skills for animation and then shared these with younger pupils. Pupils were growing in confidence and felt teachers valued their opinions. Through improved feedback and discussion of learning targets, pupils at the upper stages were becoming more aware of their progress and how to improve in some curricular areas. However, across the school, pupils were not sufficiently active in progressing their own learning or developing skills for more independent learning. While pupils had increasing opportunities to work collaboratively, they were not yet sufficiently skilled as cooperative learners.

## **Improvements in performance**

Overall, the school was making satisfactory progress in improving its performance.

Standards in English language were satisfactory. In recent years, levels of attainment had started to improve but there had been a dip in the current session. Overall, a majority of pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in reading, with a significant number of pupils achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Most pupils at the early stages were achieving appropriate national levels in writing but attainment was much weaker at the upper stages, with less than half of pupils in P6 and P7 achieving national standards. The majority of pupils with additional support needs were making appropriate progress in their learning. The school had recently introduced a more structured approach to developing and assessing pupils' skills in listening and talking. A majority of pupils were achieving appropriate national standards in listening and talking. Most pupils at P4 to P7 listened and responded well to teachers but had not fully developed these skills when working in groups. Most pupils talked confidently to each other and to adults but were less confident in talking to larger groups, for example at an assembly. While most pupils from P4 onwards could read fluently, many did not display an interest or enjoyment in reading and were unable to talk about favourite authors or features of books they had read. At the early stages most pupils could write very simple stories. From P3 onwards, pupils were writing for a range of purposes. At the middle stages, they were developing their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils at the upper stages, however were not writing extended pieces of work. The quality of spelling and punctuation was very variable.

Across the primary stages, standards in mathematics were satisfactory. The majority of pupils were attaining appropriate national standards but attainment was showing a decline in the current session. The early gains made at P2 were not sustained as pupils moved through the middle and upper stages. Several pupils at all stages were capable of achieving even higher standards. The pace of learning in mathematics was too slow. Most pupils with additional support needs were making appropriate progress with their learning. At a number of stages, pupils were learning to collect and organise information and were able to construct and interpret graphs appropriate to their level. Pupils had an appropriate knowledge of number, money and shape. At all stages, pupils were not yet quick enough with mental calculations. At P7, pupils were not sufficiently confident about their knowledge of practical measurement and properties of angles and triangles. Pupils' skills in practical aspects of mathematics were not consistently well developed across the school.

Pupils at the senior stages were making very effective use of maps of the local area to support their mathematics work when using coordinates. At several stages, pupils were using the school garden and their plants to support their understanding of aspects of science. Pupils at P5 had produced a DVD based on their conservation project about Ben Lomond. A small number of senior pupils had worked with the ICT development officer to create a very short animated video clip. Pupils' art work displayed a range of techniques and knowledge of a range of artists' styles. At all stages, pupils were developing their knowledge of healthy living and making appropriate use of ICT to research information. The school had taken some good steps to promote pupils' wider achievements, most notably in sport. Many pupils participated successfully in sporting activities, including a range of out-of-school clubs. Senior pupils had been successful in achieving success at local and authority wide cross-country championships. A number of pupils had made good progress in playing the flute and keyboard. Through regular school shows pupils worked well together and gained confidence through performing before an audience. Pupils supported

several charities and had developed an understanding of the needs of others through, for example, carol singing at Lomond Shores to raise funds for nominated charities. Senior pupils had worked effectively with other local primary schools on an anti-sectarianism project. The pupil council had begun to enable pupils to develop their awareness of good citizenship by making recommendations for improvements around the school. Ideas put forward for changes to the lunch menu were adopted. An effective buddy system was in place and pupils also took responsibility in a number of other areas, as play leaders, junior road safety officers and members of the eco committee. There remained scope to give pupils increased responsibility for decision making across the school. At P7, pupils developed a range of important social and personal skills through participating in an annual residential experience.

The school had made limited progress in overtaking the priorities in its improvement plan. The new headteacher had taken positive steps in starting to address some of the areas for improvement in the plan but recognised the need to review and prioritise these. Some of these changes were beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning experiences. For example, a revised staged intervention programme was providing more appropriate and effective support for pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning. Pupils' writing skills were beginning to improve through the introduction of a new approach, initiated through the development planning processes. With the new headteacher in place and a clearer focus on priority areas, the school was now better placed to ensure greater impact of the improvement plan on positive outcomes for pupils.

## **5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?**

Arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were satisfactory. Teachers knew pupils well and planned to meet the needs of different ability groups within their classes. However, learning activities and teaching approaches were not always suitably matched to individual pupil needs. They did not always provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils. The school had clear procedures and processes for identifying and devising support plans for pupils experiencing difficulties in learning. Parents were consulted but pupils were not yet fully involved in drafting or reviewing learning targets within these plans. A range of specialist staff, including a support for learning teacher, provided effective advice and targeted support within the school to assist in implementing the support plans. Learning assistants also provided effective support for individuals and groups of pupils. Class teachers needed to be more involved in monitoring the progress of pupils with additional support needs. In P1 and P2, an early intervention teacher and a nurture group provided effective support for vulnerable children, helping them to progress in their learning.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The quality of care, welfare and development within the school was very good. Staff demonstrated care and concern for pupils' well-being, health and safety. All staff had received training and were confident in operating the child protection policy. Pupils felt safe and secure and thought that bullying incidents were dealt with well. The school required to formalise its procedures and advice to pupils on safe use of the Internet. The recently implemented policy on promoting positive behaviour had improved behaviour and ethos within the school. There was a strong emphasis on health promotion with a breakfast club, a range of healthy lunch options as well as an active schools programme. The pupil and family support worker provided high quality support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Further measures were required to improve the attendance pattern of a small group of pupils. Children were well supported as they moved from nursery into P1. There were also effective links to support pupils at P7 as they transferred to Vale of Leven Academy.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The school's management and use of resources and space for learning was good. The accommodation was spacious and had recently been refurbished and reorganised. Teachers had started to develop the outdoor garden area to support learning. Classroom and corridor displays were relevant and clearly linked to pupils' activities. The school was well resourced with recent upgrading in ICT provision. The school entrance was welcoming and in the process of being further developed. The school had appropriate security systems in place, but there was limited access for users with restricted mobility.</p>

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The school had a positive ethos with good relationships between staff and pupils. Staff worked well together and valued the emerging opportunities to be more involved in school improvement. Staff had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and most pupils responded positively. Expectations of pupil achievement were not high enough. Pupils were not being sufficiently challenged to reach their full potential. The school had, however, improved the ways in which it recognised and celebrated achievement through house points, stickers and certificates issued at assemblies. The school had good approaches to promoting equality and fairness. There was an inclusive and improving approach to ensure that all pupils could fully participate in the life of the school. Through the religious and moral education programme, pupils learned about aspects of other faiths and the need to respect differences. Pupils had participated in anti-sectarian projects with neighbouring schools. The school chaplain made a positive contribution to the life of the school and provided regular opportunities for religious observance. There was not yet a high enough emphasis on recognising and celebrating diversity.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>The school had good approaches to involving parents, carers and families. There was an open door policy with parents made to feel very welcome. Reports gave helpful information on children's progress and the use of daily homework diaries provided ongoing communication. Newsletters were regular and informative and bulletins issued each term, outlined the planned work for each class. There was an improving pattern of attendance at parents' evenings and weekly assemblies. The pupil and family support worker provided an effective bridge between parents and the school. The school, in partnership with other local primary schools, organised helpful parents' information evenings about sensitive aspects of health education. Parents also received a letter informing them when a block of lessons on this topic was about to begin. There was an active Parent Council supporting the work of the school. It worked hard to involve more parents in the life of the school. However parental involvement in supporting their child's learning was not sufficiently developed. The school was not devising or sharing pupils' personal learning targets with parents.</p>

## **7. Leading and improving the school**

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

Haldane Primary School provided a supportive and caring environment for learning. Teachers interacted well with pupils and provided well organised lessons. In the classrooms most pupils were motivated and keen to learn. They were experiencing success out with the classroom in a range of areas, most notably in sport. However, there were challenges in improving the quality of learners' experiences and achievements. Pupils were not always experiencing exciting active learning. They were not all making sufficient progress in their learning. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics needed to be improved. Opportunities for pupils' wider achievement needed to be further extended. The school had experienced a period of instability over the past few years but the appointment of a new headteacher in August 2007 placed the school in a strong position to address these issues.

The headteacher provided good, effective leadership for the school. Although only in post for nine months, she had already had a very positive impact. Through her good interpersonal skills and more positive approach to managing pupil behaviour, she had improved the ethos within the school for staff, pupils and parents. She has gained their respect as well as that of others in the wider community. Staff had real confidence in her ability to lead them forward. She had a clear vision for the school and a good understanding of the challenges facing it. She had recognised the need to establish the right climate to initiate change. She now needed to share the vision and develop the leadership capacity of her staff to enable the school to move forward and bring about improvement. The school's approaches to self-evaluation were weak. Within the school, there had not been a climate for effective self-evaluation involving staff working collectively or as individuals. Teachers were not skilled in examining the impact of their work on outcomes for pupils. They were not tracking pupil progress or measuring progress against national standards. Staff had not been sufficiently supported or challenged in these processes. The headteacher and staff needed to address these issues and put in place an effective system to support the drive for improvement.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to improve pupil's achievements and better meet pupils' learning needs. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve the overall quality of learners' experiences;
- further develop and extend pupils' achievements, including attainment in English language and mathematics;
- meet individual learners' needs more effectively, in particular higher attaining pupils and those with poor attendance; and
- improve approaches to self-evaluation across the school, to enable staff to identify and address priorities for action more effectively.

### **What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Mairi Timmons  
HM Inspector  
2 September 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.

<b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	
The curriculum	satisfactory
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Improvements in performance	satisfactory

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	satisfactory
Equality and fairness	good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Developing people and partnerships	satisfactory
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

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
satisfactory	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.

<p><b>What parents thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What parents think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All parents felt that school reports gave very helpful information.</li> <li>• Almost all parents felt that staff showed care and concern for the welfare of their children.</li> <li>• Almost all parents felt that the school had explained clearly how they might support their children with their homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pupils thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What pupils think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All pupils felt that teachers expected them to work as hard as they could.</li> <li>• Almost all pupils enjoyed being at the school.</li> <li>• Almost all pupils felt that teachers explained things clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quarter of pupils thought that some pupils' behaviour could be better.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What staff thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What staff think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff thought the school was well lead.</li> <li>• All staff thought that they showed care and concern for the welfare of their pupils.</li> <li>• All staff thought pupil success was regularly celebrated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>

### **Appendix 3 Good practice**

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

#### **P7 ICT Animation Project**

A few pupils at P7 were presenting challenging behaviour and, or low self-esteem. Staff looked for ways to raise the self-confidence of these pupils and so improve their engagement. Through an education authority project, two groups of pupils at P7 received training in simple animation techniques and in using a tripod and camera. The pupils created animation characters and designed settings resulting in the production of animation films with a Christmas theme. The pupils gave short presentations and showed the films at the Christmas assembly for pupils and parents. Pupils at P7 then took on the responsibility of training a group of P5 pupils in the use of animation skills, who in turn produced simple animation video clips.

The impact of the pupils' participation in this project was evident in their increased confidence in presenting their work in front of an audience. This increased self-esteem had developed in to a more positive 'can do' attitude. There was a marked improvement in behaviour. They also had to develop patience and understanding when working with the younger pupils and had to learn to work collaboratively as part of a team. They felt successful in terms of being able to produce something that has received such a positive response from everyone. A member of staff was trained to ensure that this good practice was sustainable and so that the P5 group could, in turn, become involved in training another group of pupils.

## **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 Executive Director of Education 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, Ground Floor Suite, Unit 7, Blair Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2LA or by telephoning 0141 435 3550. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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](mailto: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](http://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, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: [ask@sps.org.uk](mailto:ask@sps.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.sps.org.uk](http://www.sps.org.uk).

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