

**St Peter's Primary School
Bellsmyre
West Dunbartonshire Council
19 June 2007**

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1. Background

St Peter's Primary School was inspected in March 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, priest and teacher association (PPTA), a group of parents¹ and the local parish priest.

St Peter's Primary School is a denominational school serving the Bellsmyre area of Dumbarton. At the time of the inspection the roll was 133. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The warm and welcoming atmosphere and confident, courteous and well-behaved pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics.
- High quality pastoral care and effective approaches to health promotion.
- Partnerships with parents and other agencies, in particular to support potentially vulnerable 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.

All parents who responded to the questionnaire were very satisfied with most aspects of the school. They all felt that their children enjoyed school and found the work stimulating. They thought that teachers set high standards, encouraged children to work to the best of their ability and were caring. Parents thought that the school was

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

well led and that staff made them feel welcome. Monthly reports on pupils' personal and social development were valued by parents. Pupils were very positive about almost all aspects of school. All pupils felt that teachers helped them when they were having difficulty with their work. All staff were very positive about all aspects of the school.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Overall, the structure of the curriculum was good. Pupils had a broad and balanced experience which was enhanced by visiting teachers and speakers. For example, pupils had worked with an art specialist to create willow sculptures to improve the school grounds. Pupils in P6 and P7 were making good progress learning French. They had successfully prepared PowerPoint presentations in French which were sent to a twin school in Paris. Personal, social and health education was given an appropriately high priority. The school had recently made effective use of available curriculum time to develop creativity and pupils' thinking skills. While the impact of the use of this additional time had not yet been evaluated, one outcome was that almost all pupils could play chess. While pupils had high quality experiences in physical education, they were not meeting the recommended two hours of physical activity per week. There was insufficient coverage of other world religions. Teaching had important strengths. All teachers had very good relationships with their pupils. In most lessons teachers shared with pupils what they expected them to learn. In a few lessons teachers made very effective use of questioning to develop their thinking, but this was not a consistent feature across all classes. In a few classes, pupils were given too much time to complete activities which were not always sufficiently challenging. Teachers were beginning to make more effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance their teaching. They issued a variety of homework regularly to support classwork.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was good. Pupils were enthusiastic and hardworking, they listened attentively to their teachers. Almost all pupils were keen to please their teachers. At all stages, pupils worked well together in groups and pairs. For example, P1 pupils cooperated to design and build model houses and P4/5 pupils worked together to gather information about planets. Pupils in P5/6 took responsibility for managing their group tasks during 'thinking time'. However, in too many teacher-led lessons, pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning or think for themselves. At times, the pace of learning was too slow and pupils were not sufficiently stimulated or challenged. Overall, pupils were not always sure of what they needed to do to improve their work.

The school took good steps to promote pupils' wider achievements. Pupils were successfully developing confidence and positive attitudes towards others. Older pupils gave very good support to younger pupils as playground buddies. The school had achieved an Eco School Scotland Green Flag for its approach to sustainable development education and improvements to the school environment. The school had also achieved a local authority award for health promotion. Staff promoted a healthy lifestyle through a range of activities. For example, the catering manager worked with

pupils to create healthy food and the school had achieved an award for a hand washing campaign. Pupils in P7 developed skills of leadership and teamwork through an outdoor education experience. At all stages, pupils contributed effectively to the school's decision making process through the pupil council, an Eco School group and a creativity group. Pupils were developing citizenship skills through raising significant sums of money for local, national and international charities including a project aimed at assisting the people of Congo. All pupils gained a sense of audience through participating in the Christmas concert.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Pupils' attainment in reading and writing had shown a slight decline in recent years. Across the school, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and the majority were achieving these levels in writing. At P2, almost half were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making appropriate progress. At most stages, pupils listened well to instructions. Pupils spoke confidently about their personal experiences. Most pupils read fluently and with good expression. They understood the main ideas in texts they read. At P6 and P7, they showed an appreciation of a range of poetry, writing styles of different authors and most enjoyed reading for pleasure. Pupils in P1 could confidently find the contents page and index in non-fiction books and select an important fact to share with their class. At all stages pupils wrote for a suitably wide range of purposes. However, at P6 and P7, pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to write at length. At most stages, the standard of handwriting and presentation had scope for improvement.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Over the past three years, levels of attainment had improved. All pupils at P3, almost all pupils at P4 and most pupils at P6 and P7 were achieving appropriate national levels. At P2, almost all pupils were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Some pupils at the middle and upper stages were capable of achieving higher standards. Pupils with additional support needs were making appropriate progress. By P7, pupils were confident when extracting information from a range of graphs and charts. However, pupils had not had sufficient opportunities to use ICT to support their learning in mathematics. At earlier stages, pupils were beginning to make more effective use of computers to produce graphs from the information they had collected. Pupils demonstrated accuracy in both written and mental calculation. At the upper stages, pupils were confident when using fractions and percentages. At all stages, pupils demonstrated skills in aspects of measurement. They could identify accurately two- and three-dimensional shapes and describe their properties. Pupils were confident in using a range of strategies to solve problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs were good. The school had been involved in implementing a range of effective education authority initiatives, including early intervention, to assist pupils at a sufficiently early stage to enable them to overtake their learning difficulties. Pupils with additional support needs received well-judged, effective support and were making good progress in their learning. However, in some classes, tasks and activities were not well enough matched to the needs of higher attaining pupils. Class and specialist teachers, visiting support teachers and support staff provided very effective assistance to all pupils, in particular those who experienced difficulties in their learning. They offered a range of provision to help children overcome barriers to learning. The school had worked with parents to create individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for identified pupils. The school worked very effectively with a wide range of external agencies to target a range of support to pupils and families.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school provided a very good level of pastoral care. Staff knew pupils very well and were sensitive to their individual physical, social and emotional needs. Pupils felt safe and well cared for at school. The playground was well supervised. All staff were alert to their responsibilities regarding child protection. The pupil and family support worker gave very good support to potentially vulnerable pupils. Teachers used discussion very effectively to allow pupils to discuss issues such as anti-bullying. The school had produced a helpful leaflet for pupils on anti-bullying. Pupils had access to an effective complaints procedure. There were very effective arrangements to assist the move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Our Lady and St Patrick's High School.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. Staff worked hard to create very good displays of pupils' work in both classrooms and corridors. A large assembly hall was well used for physical education, assemblies and school shows. There was a lack of appropriate changing facilities. A spacious dining room allowed pupils to enjoy a good social experience at lunchtimes. Pupils benefited from the ICT rooms and library. They were very positive about improvements that had been made to their toilets. Appropriate security arrangements were in place. External paintwork was peeling and the playground, including an area with steps, was uneven. Access for those with mobility problems was restricted to the ground floor of the building.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The headteacher, depute headteacher and staff worked hard to create a warm and welcoming environment for pupils, parents, staff and visitors. Pupils and staff were proud of their school and there was a notable sense of teamwork. Pupils were very polite and courteous and almost all wore uniform. Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They did not have sufficiently high enough expectations for the quality of pupils' work and their attainment, particularly higher attaining pupils. At times, praise was over used. Pupils' own aspirations were unnecessarily modest. The school celebrated Scotland's diverse culture and very effectively used joint sporting and cultural events with a local school to promote anti-sectarianism. Staff successfully promoted inclusion. The school displayed race awareness documents prominently, including a helpful leaflet for pupils. Weekly assemblies provided good opportunities for religious observance and the celebration of pupils' achievements. Staff were committed to the promotion of the school as a community of faith.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnerships with parents, the local community and a wide range of support agencies were very good. The School Board was very supportive of the school. An active PPTA raised funds for the school, for example, to subsidise buses for visits which enhanced pupils' learning experiences. Parents valued twice yearly parents' evenings and annual reports. They praised a workshop run by staff to explain how they could support the development of their children's writing skills. The school consulted parents appropriately on sensitive health issues. Pupils, staff and parents worked effectively with a local school on a joint numeracy project. The school had very strong links with the nursery located within the building. Pupils regularly celebrated important feast days in the local church. Visiting speakers such as the community police-officer and health education professionals enriched pupils' learning experiences. The school worked very effectively with a wide range of agencies to support vulnerable pupils.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Peter's Primary School provided its pupils with a good education within a safe, caring and supportive environment. Pupils were making good progress in their learning. The quality of teaching was good and pupils' learning needs were met well. The school was working very effectively with a range of agencies to support pupils. Very good partnerships existed with parents and the wider community. Attainment in mathematics had improved and was very good. Although attainment in English language was good, it had recently declined. Pupils' behaviour was very good. Teachers now needed to increase their expectations of pupils' attainment and increase the pace and challenge of lessons, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

Overall, the quality of leadership was good. The headteacher had been in post for eight years. He was very well respected by pupils, parents, staff and the wider community. He had successfully developed and sustained a positive climate for learning. He was well supported by the deputy headteacher. Both the headteacher and deputy were strongly committed to inclusion. They were highly visible around the school. The deputy headteacher was leading developments effectively in a significant number of key areas, for example literacy, numeracy and support for pupils. The principal teacher was an experienced classroom practitioner. However, she had not been given the opportunity to lead any improvements identified in the current school development plan. A number of class teachers were leading initiatives, for example, in enterprise and active learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitored forward plans, sampled pupils' work and visited classes to observe learning and teaching. Teachers

were given written feedback which was supportive to them, but which was not always sufficiently focused on improvements to learning and teaching. Together, the headteacher and depute headteacher met regularly with teachers to discuss pupils' progress. Pupils' attainment information could be used more effectively at these meetings both by senior managers and by individual teachers to plan pupils' next steps in learning. With a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation focussed on learning, teaching and attainment the school had the capacity to improve provision for pupils.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve aspects of learning, teaching and leadership. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to develop information and communications technology to improve pupils' learning experiences;
- increase teachers' expectations with a view to improving the pace and challenge for all pupils;
- review the remits of promoted post-holders to ensure that there is a clearer focus on continuous improvement; and
- improve approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

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.

Elizabeth Morrison
HM Inspector

19 June 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	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	very 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	adequate
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	good
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

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"> • Their child enjoyed school, were treated fairly and found the work stimulating. • Teachers set high standards for attainment. • Staff made them feel welcome and parent's evenings were helpful. • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • Staff showed care and concern for their child. • 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"> • Teachers helped them when they experienced difficulty with their work. • Staff were good at dealing with bullying. • They got on well with other pupils. • They got about the right amount of homework. 	<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"> • All staff had very positive views about all aspects of the life and work of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no issues raised.

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 Director of Education and Cultural 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.

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freeport EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@sps.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.sps.org.uk.

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