

**Our Lady of Loretto
Primary School
Clydebank
West Dunbartonshire Council
5 October 2004**

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1. Background

Our Lady of Loretto Primary School was inspected in May 2004 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 and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They 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. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), a group of parents and the two parish priests.

Our Lady of Loretto is a denominational school serving an area of Clydebank. At the time of the inspection the roll was 331. 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.

- Staff commitment and the effective approaches to teamworking.
- The concern shown by all staff for pupils' care, welfare and well-being, and the positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- Pupils' opportunities to develop social and personal skills.
- Productive partnerships with the School Board, PTA, parents and the Church.
- High quality support for pupils provided by class teachers, classroom assistants and the support for learning team.

3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff

Parents and carers were very supportive. They thought that the school had a good reputation in the community, and that they were made to feel welcome when they visited. They felt that staff treated children fairly and showed concern for their care and welfare. Almost all felt that the school was well led. A few indicated that they would appreciate a clearer view of the school's priorities for improving education, and better consultation about decisions affecting their children. All staff felt that the school was well led. Some teachers thought that more effective use could be made of staff

development time. Support staff did not feel fully involved in the decision making process. Almost all pupils expressed their appreciation of teachers' help, and said that they felt safe and well looked after in school. The majority felt that behaviour in school was good. Most thought that the school dealt well with any incidents of bullying.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided a broad and balanced curriculum. Appropriate time allocations were given to curricular areas. There were good opportunities for pupils at the early stages to be involved actively in their learning, for example through play. Staff had made a good start to improving programmes of study, but much remained to be done. Pupils at P6 and P7 were learning French. A range of visiting specialist teachers made valuable contributions to pupils' learning experiences in specific areas of the curriculum. The overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers used an appropriate range of learning approaches. They shared the aims of lessons with pupils and made good use of questions to recall previous work. They gave clear instructions and explanations and used praise well to encourage pupils. However, the pace of learning was slow due to weaknesses in curricular programmes. Teachers used homework tasks effectively to promote pupils' independent learning skills.

At all stages, pupils responded well in class and cooperated positively with staff and with one another. When given opportunities, they worked well in groups and took good account of others' opinions. They needed more opportunities to be involved in discussions in many areas of the curriculum. Pupils were keen to learn, but too often tasks lacked sufficient challenge. In English language and mathematics, they needed further guidance about what they needed to do to improve their performance. They were not provided with sufficiently clear and challenging targets for improving their attainment. Across the curriculum, pupils used information and communications technology (ICT) confidently to enhance their learning.

Pupils participated effectively in the pupil council and had made innovative suggestions for improving aspects of school life. Older pupils helped to ensure that younger ones were well looked after in the playground and in social areas. Pupils were aware of the needs of others through their enthusiastic support for a number of charities. They had achieved success in sporting events and in other out-of-school activities and demonstrated very good levels of confidence and self-esteem. Most had a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to look after the environment.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was fair. Pupils with additional support needs were progressing well. In recent years pupils' attainment in writing had risen to above the national average, but had remained below in reading. Only a few pupils had exceeded national levels earlier than would have been expected. Pupils listened carefully to teachers' explanations and instructions and responded well. They also listened attentively to their classmates in discussion. Most expressed their views clearly, but lacked confidence in talking at length, particularly at the upper stages.

Most pupils read for pleasure and could discuss what they had read. At the upper stages, some showed good understanding of the writer's skills. At all stages, pupils produced good examples of imaginative and functional writing. Overall, their presentation of written work was very good. They used ICT effectively to draft and present aspects of their writing.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was fair. At the early stages, levels of attainment had risen steadily over recent years. Pupils with additional support needs were progressing well. Almost all pupils in P2 had achieved national levels of attainment earlier than would normally be expected. Almost all pupils at P3, and the majority at P4, were achieving appropriate levels. At P7 less than half had achieved the appropriate level. Most pupils coped well with class work. However, some were capable of achieving higher standards. At all stages, pupils were quick and accurate in mental calculation and had a good grasp of basic number concepts. They showed good understanding and knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. By P7, pupils could confidently organise and interpret information using a wide range of graphs, but needed more opportunities to use ICT to display information. Across the school, pupils were making good progress in developing skills in problem-solving and enquiry.

5. How well are pupils supported?

All staff provided a very good level of support to ensure pupils' well-being. They knew the pupils well and were sensitive to their emotional, physical and social needs. The school had effective arrangements for pupils' care and welfare, including clear guidance on child protection and how to deal with bullying. Pupils understood what to do if they were anxious or concerned.

One of the deputy headteachers managed the very effective provision to support pupils with a range of needs. The support for learning teacher worked effectively with class teachers to provide well-focused support for individuals and small groups. Class teachers also contributed positively by providing a range of suitable activities, and by using appropriate teaching approaches to meet pupils' individual learning needs. However, programmes of study needed to be made more flexible to allow better use of assessment information for planning next steps in learning. Staff prepared appropriate individualised educational programmes with clear learning targets to assist pupils' progress. Teachers used classroom assistants and the services of other agencies to provide valuable additional help to meet pupils' specific learning needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation and facilities was good. The school building was well maintained, and pupils' work was attractively displayed throughout. There were two specialist areas for ICT and good facilities for play and storage. Resources were in good supply and were very well organised. However, some aspects of accommodation required attention. These included health and safety issues relating to the boys' toilets, stairways and the perimeter fence.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The school provided a very welcoming, secure and inclusive environment. Relationships between pupils and staff were very good. Pupils were polite and almost all were well behaved. They respected and supported one another and were proud to be part of the school community. The school made effective use of daily devotions and weekly assemblies to celebrate achievement and to provide very good opportunities for pupils to worship together. Relationships between all staff were very good. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements were not high enough. The school promoted a strong sense of equality and fairness, and everyone's contribution was valued.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had developed good links with parents, carers and the wider community. The School Board and the PTA gave valuable support to the school. Staff communicated very well with parents through informative monthly newsletters and appropriately detailed reports on pupils' progress. Parents' evenings and meetings to inform parents of curricular developments were held regularly. Good association with local industry and other educational establishments allowed pupils to participate in activities which enriched the curriculum. The local parishes gave good support to the school.

7. Improving the school

The school offered a secure and caring environment, in which all were valued and where tolerance, fairness and equality were successfully promoted. The quality of teaching was good overall. Pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. Standards of

attainment in English language and mathematics were fair and there were indications of improvement. Although a start had been made, much remained to be done in order to improve pupils' attainment overall.

At the time of the inspection, two deputy headteachers had acting responsibility for the leadership and management of the school. Both were highly committed to the school and had taken important steps to improve pupils' attainment by reviewing curricular programmes. They had introduced approaches to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching. They had involved staff fully in addressing priorities identified in the school development plan and had worked effectively to raise staff morale. Staff and parents held them in high esteem. The education authority was providing a high level of support until the appointment of a headteacher.

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- attainment in English language and mathematics;
- approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school;
- the use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and to plan next steps in their learning;
- curricular programmes, so as to offer greater challenge; and
- aspects of accommodation to provide a better environment for learning.

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

Robert McKinstry
HM Inspector

5 October 2004

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Accommodation and facilities
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Leadership

We judged the following to be fair

- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be unsatisfactory

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<p>What pleased parents and carers most</p>	<p>What parents and carers would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's reputation in the community. • The welcome offered to them by staff. • Fair treatment of their children. • The concern shown for their children's care and welfare. • Informative and helpful parents' evenings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearer idea of the school's priorities for improving education. • Better consultation procedures.
<p>What pleased pupils most</p>	<p>What pupils would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers gave clear explanations, checked homework regularly and praised them when they had done well. • The school's efforts to keep them safe and healthy. • Teachers helped them when they were having difficulties with their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in school. • Approaches to homework.
<p>What pleased staff most</p>	<p>What staff would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication. • Leadership and teamwork. • Relations with the local community. • The school's approach to bullying. • The mutual respect between staff and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of staff development time. • More involvement in decision making.

How can you contact us?

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, Unit 7, Ground Floor, 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.

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 or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. 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
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

Telephone number: 0870 011 5378
e-mail: enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk

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