

**Glengowan Primary School
Larkhall
South Lanarkshire Council
4 September 2007**

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1. Background

Glengowan Primary School was inspected in May 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 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 town of Larkhall. At the time of the inspection the roll was 386. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. Around a quarter of pupils attended the school as a result of parental placing requests. Senior staff had worked successfully to minimise disruption from the extended absence of two members of staff, including the deputy headteacher who had responsibility for P4 to P7.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Friendly, helpful and courteous pupils whose achievements spanned a wide variety of challenging activities.
- The quality of the social, literacy and problem-solving skills developed by pupils at P1/P2 from the school's new approaches to learning through play.
- Staff commitment to pupils' wellbeing and pastoral care.
- The effectiveness of the school's partnerships with parents and its community.
- The headteacher's strong leadership for learning and her promotion of pupils' wider achievements.

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

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, pupils and staff were very positive about the school. Parents thought that the school had a good reputation in the community and was well led. They felt that teachers provided very helpful information on their children's progress, and set high standards for attainment and behaviour. Staff made them feel welcome in the school and responded well to any concerns they raised. Pupils enjoyed being at school and felt that they got on well together. They felt that staff listened to them and, in addition, used 'Let us know' boxes to pass on any concerns they had. A few pupils thought that the behaviour of a small number of pupils could be better. Pupils appreciated the help teachers gave them to improve their work. Staff felt that the school celebrated pupils' successes regularly. Almost all teachers and all support staff liked working in the school. A majority of support staff felt that standards for pupils' behaviour were not upheld consistently across the school.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was suitably broad and balanced. It gave effective attention to aspects such as enterprise, citizenship and thinking skills. The school had worked effectively to develop pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum. At P1 and P2, well-planned arrangements for learning through play helped pupils to build effectively on their achievements in nursery. The formal programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) helped pupils to develop their social skills well. The school was improving aspects of its health education programme to broaden pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles. It did not yet provide all pupils with two hours of physical education (PE) each week. The quality of teaching had important strengths. Teachers were well organised, provided clear explanations and shared with pupils what they were expected to learn. In a few lessons, teachers used the learning aims very well to make pupils aware of the skills they were developing. Many used open questions effectively to develop pupils' thinking, and were extending their use of ICT to enliven teaching. They also helped pupils to review their progress throughout the lesson. Overall, however, the quality of teaching varied as teachers worked with different degrees of success to introduce active approaches to learning. Some extended homework tasks were designed well to develop pupils' independence, problem-solving skills and creativity. There was scope to develop this approach further.

The overall quality of learning was good. A developing strength was the way in which pupils assessed their own and each other's work and made helpful suggestions for improvement. Pupils demonstrated successful learning across a wide range of activities, and shared what they had learned with others at assemblies. Across the school, pupils used computers confidently, for example to present their poems, stories and reports effectively and to consolidate their classwork. At P1 and P2, pupils learned

very effectively from each other during group play activities, where they interacted well and helped each other solve practical problems. At P4, pupils listened to instructions very carefully during their first experience of modelling with clay and created attractive jars. Pupils in P5 collaborated enthusiastically in group music making. Teachers, however, did not vary the composition of groups enough or ensure sufficient range and challenge in group activities. While most pupils worked well without supervision, the behaviour of a few sometimes interrupted others' learning. The pace of learning was occasionally too slow to engage pupils appropriately and help them to make sufficient progress.

Staff worked successfully to broaden all pupils' achievements and develop their self-esteem. A strong feature of pupils' wider achievement was their effective citizenship skills. For example, at P3 and P5, pupils had designed competition-winning safety posters. One poster, linked to the opening of the local railway station, had attracted national attention. At P6, pupils collaborated very effectively to develop the school's 'Safe Travel' plan. Pupils at P7 had designed homes for the future based on sustainable sources of energy and had won a significant prize for the school. At all stages, pupils had developed skills in team working, problem solving and organisation by participating in a range of enterprising activities. They had prepared a very striking exhibition of creative artwork and organised a successful Fair Trade coffee morning. Pupils developed their fitness by participating regularly in a wide range of sporting activities at lunchtime and after school. At P4, pupils responded very positively to a 'pedometer challenge', accumulating a very good tally of steps each day. A team of P6/P7 pupils had worked well together to win a silver medal for cross country running in a local competition. At P7, pupils developed a range of personal and team skills further during an outdoor education week.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Overall, levels of attainment had improved in reading and writing over the last two years. All pupils made good progress in their classwork. At P1 and P2, pupils were developing good literacy skills, building well on their experiences at nursery. Across the school, most pupils attained national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. A significant number attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected, especially in writing. At all stages, pupils listened attentively and took part in regular and lively class and group discussions. Pupils at P7 expressed their views confidently on a range of topical issues and built well on each others' ideas. Many pupils read regularly for pleasure and spoke enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. Across the school, pupils identified and discussed key features of language successfully in a range of texts they read. At P2, they wrote interesting and very well-presented mini books. At all stages, pupils wrote regularly for a range of purposes and different audiences. They did not have sufficient opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum. The standard of handwriting and presentation was good at all stages.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good, although levels of attainment had declined in recent years. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. A few pupils from P3 to P7 were capable of achieving higher standards if set more challenging tasks. Pupils who experienced difficulties with aspects of mathematics made appropriate progress in their learning. At all stages, pupils could collect, present and interpret information using an appropriate variety of graphs and charts. Pupils at P6, for example, had surveyed pupils' routes to school as part of the school's travel plan. Pupils at P6 and P7 used spreadsheets efficiently to handle information. Almost all pupils performed well in written and mental calculations, and were developing a sound understanding of time and money. At P1, for example, pupils used their money skills confidently as part of play activities. Pupils' skills in decimals and fractions were not as well developed. Across the school, pupils could identify and discuss symmetry and two- and three-dimensional shapes. At all stages, pupils were developing good skills in problem-solving and enquiry.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Overall, arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were good. Teachers shared assessment information with pupils to help them understand their strengths and how to improve. Helpful planning sheets and guidance on how to organise ideas supported pupils' activities. Teachers provided pupils with helpful feedback on their work. Support staff provided very effective assistance for individuals and groups of pupils. The specialist assistance of visiting staff for pupils with specific support needs, including those for whom English was an additional language, helped them to make very good progress. Teachers generally matched tasks and resources well to pupils' needs. In some lessons, they spent too long consolidating aspects of learning. Occasionally they directed pupils too strongly and limited their independence.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Staff were highly committed to pupils' care and welfare and were sensitive to their social and emotional needs. They followed the school's clear and appropriate arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, the prevention of bullying and early morning attendance checks. Pupils felt safe and very well cared for. The school's approaches to pupils' personal and social development included an appropriate emphasis on alcohol and substance misuse and personal relationships. Staff gave a high priority to pupils' wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. The school issued all pupils with fruit and water each day and provided healthy lunch options. The Active Schools Coordinator, teachers and members of the local community worked effectively to provide pupils with an imaginative range of physical activities. In addition, pupils developed their fitness through an Active Health rota which increased daily physical activity. The school had received a bronze award for its health promotion and was working hard to achieve the silver standard. Arrangements for pupils entering P1 and for pupils in P7 transferring to Larkhall Academy were clear and effective.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation was adequate. Staff and pupils made effective use of available space, especially the open area for play at the early stages and the gymnasium for PE. Classrooms were bright and stimulating environments for learning, although some were cramped. The school provided pupils with a good range of fiction and non-fiction library books and regular access to a well-organised computer suite. The janitorial staff maintained the fabric and cleanliness of the school commendably well. The school had appropriate security arrangements. While pupils spoke very positively about the friendly reception they received in the cafeteria, the room was often cold. The school provided very limited access for anyone with restricted mobility.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The quality of the school's climate and relationships was very good. Pupils, staff and parents identified strongly with the school and were very proud of its achievements. Pupils were friendly and courteous and parents and visitors felt very welcome in the school. Staff teamwork was strong and staff felt valued. Almost all pupils behaved well and cooperated with their teachers. The school promoted pupils' wider achievements very effectively. Staff celebrated pupils' successes regularly, at assemblies and in displays around the school. The school motivated most pupils well, particularly at P4 to P7, by helping them to achieve personal targets, which recognised their efforts and positive attitudes. A few teachers set appropriately high expectations for the amount and quality of work pupils should produce. With consistent challenge, pupils at most stages could have achieved more. At P3 to P7, pupils played an important part in deciding how to improve the school by using the suggestions box regularly and supporting the pupil council. Staff promoted equality and fairness actively in lessons and through particular aspects of the curriculum, such as anti-sectarianism. Pupils also learned about global citizenship through their links with a school in Malawi and the wide ranging fund-raising they did each year. The school had appropriate arrangements for religious observance.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school had established very good partnerships with parents, the School Board, PTA and the wider community. It kept parents well informed of its work and pupils' progress through, for example, weekly target reports, helpful workshops, parents' evenings and a series of interesting newsletters. These included class newsletters and regular information on the school's health promotion campaigns. The school had surveyed parents' views on health issues. Parents' active involvement in the school included running gardening and badminton clubs for pupils and supporting outdoor education. Links with local businesses helped widen pupils' horizons as part of education for enterprise and citizenship. The school had very productive partnerships with associated schools, educational support services, the chaplains and community police.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Glengowan Primary School provided pupils with a very caring and supportive environment for learning. The school actively promoted pupils' wider achievements and attainment. Many pupils achieved success in a broad range of activities within and beyond the school day. Most attained appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Increasing numbers attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected, especially in writing. Staff needed to set consistently high expectations to ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress. The school was making good progress towards achieving a silver award as a health promoting school. Pupils and staff benefited from strong support from parents and its wider community.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. She had a clear vision for the school, based on ensuring a consistently high quality of learning experience for all pupils. She led staff effectively in promoting a culture of wider achievement across the school. She had involved staff successfully in agreeing school priorities for improvement and monitoring progress towards school targets. Her strong inter-personal skills and her commitment to taking the school forward had won the confidence and support of staff and parents. The depute headteacher with responsibility for P1 to P3 provided very effective support for the headteacher and staff. Staff held her in high regard. The two principal teachers supported the headteacher, pupils and staff ably. The headteacher had effective approaches to evaluate the quality of the school's work. Senior managers had worked hard to minimise the impact of the absence of the formal depute on the implementation of its quality assurance arrangements. These included visits by the headteacher and depute to monitor the quality of learning and teaching, and sampling of pupils' work. They provided teachers with helpful feedback and also analysed pupils' progress rigorously. Teachers responded positively to opportunities to share effective practice and support school improvement. Improved arrangements for reviewing teaching plans, peer-observations and active participation in school working groups were helping to establish a culture of continuous improvement across the school.

Main points for action

As well as building on the strengths and addressing the issues raised throughout this report, the school and the education authority should address the following main point for action:

- ensure consistently high standards of teaching and learning to meet pupils' needs effectively and help raise their attainment.

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.

Mary Ritchie
HM Inspector

4 September 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	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	adequate
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	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	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"> • Parents thought that the school set high standards for pupils' attainment, and that staff encouraged pupils to work to the best of their ability. • Parents' evenings and reports on their children's progress were helpful. • Staff showed care and concern for their children's welfare and treated them fairly. • The school had a good reputation in the community and was well led. 	<p>There were no significant issues.</p>
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pupils felt that the school helped them to keep safe and healthy. • Pupils felt they got on well together and that staff knew them well. • Teachers explained things clearly, told them when they did things well and helped them when they were stuck with their work. • They felt they had the right amount of homework and that teachers were good at letting them know how to improve their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few pupils thought that the behaviour of a small number of pupils could be better and that sometimes staff could be fairer in the way they treated pupils.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff felt that the school celebrated pupils' successes regularly and showed care and concern for pupils' welfare. • Staff liked working in the school and appreciated pupils' enthusiasm for learning. • Staff worked hard to promote good relations with the local community. • Teachers felt that there was effective communication among staff and regular discussions about how to achieve school priorities. • They thought that the school was well led. 	<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 Executive Director (Education Resources), 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, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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