

**St Fillan's Primary School
Houston
Renfrewshire Council
9 October 2007**

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1. Background

St Fillan's 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 evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school is a denominational school serving Houston, Crosslees and Bridge of Weir. At the time of the inspection the roll was 204. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average. The school had achieved Charter Mark status for the commitment of staff to providing a quality service.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Excellent relationships, teamwork and the high standard of pastoral care shown by all staff.
- Strong, productive partnerships with parents, local schools and the wider community.
- The improvement of experience for learners through the school's approaches to self-evaluation.
- The organisation and managing of timetabling arrangements to enhance pupils' progress in learning.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher and the commitment and effective leadership for learning across the school of the senior management team, teachers and support staff.

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 all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Overall, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the school. All parents felt that the school gave helpful information about their child's progress. They thought their children were happy at school and enjoyed lessons, particularly in science. They appreciated the wide range of activities arranged for their children outwith the formal school day. Pupils were satisfied with all aspects of the school. They said that new approaches to promoting positive behaviour were making a positive difference to their learning. They were pleased with the relaxation techniques they had acquired and said that environmental studies was particularly enjoyable. They thought teacher's explained things clearly and the school helped them to stay safe and healthy. Staff expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. They felt that they communicated effectively as a staff and maintained very good relationships. They enjoyed working in the school and praised the pupils for their positive attitudes to learning. All staff appreciated the school's effective provision for professional staff development.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided a very good curriculum which was broad and well balanced. Staff used flexible time effectively to allocate additional time to sustaining high levels of attainment in English language and mathematics. Teachers made good use of meaningful contexts to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. They used the Eco-garden and visitors to the school very well to enhance pupils' learning experiences in science and environmental studies. There was very good provision for personal and social education, citizenship and enterprise education. Staff placed a strong emphasis on health education and used a range of effective approaches to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils from P1 to P7 benefited from two hours of high quality physical education (PE) each week. Teaching was of a consistently very good quality across the school with a few lessons being of outstanding quality. Teachers consistently shared the purposes of lessons with pupils and their explanations were always clear. Teachers reviewed lessons and used questioning very effectively to help pupils develop and explore their knowledge and understanding. They encouraged and valued pupils' contributions to lessons. There were examples of very good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning. Homework was used well to support pupils' learning.

The quality of pupils' learning was very good. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding were enhanced by the range of high quality learning experiences provided by staff. Pupils were very well behaved, confident and highly motivated. At all stages, they worked well together and were developing skills of independent learning. There were examples of very good collaborative approaches to learning. For

example, pupils in P1 worked in small groups to research the personality traits of characters in a story. Pupils in P3 effectively created challenging questions to develop their classmates' understanding of their class novel. At P7, pupils worked well together to create and invent musical effects using a variety of instruments. This included very effective use of files downloaded from the Internet. At all stages, the quality of pupils' work and the pace of learning in PE and science was notable.

The school promoted and celebrated very effectively pupils' wider achievements. In termly achievement assemblies, pupils selected specific achievements to be highlighted and celebrated. The school had recently gained health promoting status, Green Flag status as part of the Eco Schools (Scotland) initiative and a Gold Certificate for Enterprise as part of the local council's programme. The school reached the national finals in the K'Nex Challenge which involved P6 pupils in problem solving tasks. Pupils participated in a wide range of after-school clubs and activities. Staff reviewed these regularly, and consulted parents when planning new opportunities. Pupils participated enthusiastically in an annual careers fair and developed their knowledge and skills of enterprise through a wide range of curricular inserts at all stages. Pupils were developing a very good awareness of their responsibilities to themselves and to one another.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good. Attainment had risen over recent years. At all stages, all or almost all pupils attained appropriate national levels of attainment in reading. Most pupils did so in writing. At P2, most pupils in reading, and the majority in writing, achieved relevant levels of attainment earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils not attaining the appropriate levels were well supported and making good progress. Across the school almost all pupils had well-developed skills in listening and talking. They listened well in class to staff, and to each other, when working together on classroom challenges and other activities such as evaluating each other's work. Pupils had positive attitudes to the value of reading, and could talk with confidence about their use of non-fiction texts. When given opportunities for extended writing, they could write informatively on their personal reading and their learning in other subjects. For example, setting out detailed accounts of plant structures in environmental studies. Opportunities to read, write and speak in Scots featured at all stages, for example, pupils at P7 had written imaginative pieces about mythical Scots beasts which they had created. Standards of presentation of written work were good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Standards of attainment had been consistently high for some years. Almost all pupils were achieving minimum national levels of attainment. Significant numbers across the stages were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils were making very good progress in their coursework. At all stages, pupils had used computers to organise and display information. They were confident in written and mental calculations. By P7, they could use fractions, decimals and percentages competently. They had a very good understanding of money and time including using the 24-hour clock. Across the school, pupils could identify an appropriate range of

two- and three-dimensional shapes and could discuss with confidence their properties. They could make effective use of the properties of angles to solve simple mathematical problems. At all stages, pupils were developing very good approaches to solving problems set in a variety of contexts. They could identify and apply a range of strategies to help them reach a solution.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Arrangements to meet pupils' learning needs were very good. In most lessons, teachers provided appropriate tasks and activities for almost all pupils. The depute headteacher effectively coordinated a wide range of support provided by staff and external agencies for pupils with additional support needs. Procedures were rigorously monitored and ensured that those pupils experiencing difficulties made good progress from their previous levels of attainment. The school benefited from the inputs of the highly committed additional support staff. They interacted very well with pupils, and worked closely with class teachers to support individuals and groups. Class teachers had prepared appropriate individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for specific pupils. These contained clear criteria for judging progress which were shared with parents and pupils. The school had very effective arrangements to support pupils entering P1 and for those transferring from P7 to St Benedict's Secondary school.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school's approaches to pastoral care were excellent. Pupils felt safe and very well looked after and thought that staff listened to any concerns they might have. Staff used highly effective daily start and finish routines to allow pupils to discuss their emotional needs. All staff placed a very high priority on pupils' care and welfare and were fully aware of child protection procedures. They worked effectively together to create a climate of mutual trust, respect and confidence. Approaches to anti-bullying and the promotion of positive behaviour permeated the school and were very well understood by pupils, parents and staff. Pupils were developing positive attitudes to their health and well-being through, for example, regular physical exercise and participation in after-school clubs. Healthy eating was promoted very effectively. The school ensured pupils were well informed about personal safety, relationships and substance misuse.

Aspect	Comment
<p>Quality of accommodation and facilities</p>	<p>The school's accommodation and facilities were very good. The school building provided a welcoming environment for learning. Almost all classrooms were spacious. They were bright and displays included many very good examples of pupils' work. Staff regularly used an Eco-garden and breakout areas to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils at the early stages played well in the active learning area within their large classroom. All classes made regular use of the ICT equipment. A separate hall was used effectively for PE. Although the dining room was small, pupils benefited from a well managed and effective approach which created a very positive atmosphere for dining. The school had appropriate access for users with restricted mobility. Building security arrangements were appropriate.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>Relationships throughout the school were excellent and staff and pupil morale was very high. The headteacher and staff had created a very welcoming, caring and supportive environment for pupils, staff, parents and visitors. Staff and pupils identified very strongly with the school and were very proud to be associated with it. Staff and pupil morale and the quality of teamwork contributed significantly to the very good learning environment. They demonstrated high levels of team work for learning. Pupils were polite, very well behaved, and cooperative with teachers and with each other. Staff had high expectations of pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitude to learning. Regular school assemblies provided good opportunities for pupils to worship together and for celebrating a range of pupils' achievements. Pupils had a secure knowledge and understanding of race equality and cultural diversity. They celebrated the cultures of pupils within the school.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The quality of partnership with parents and the local community were excellent. These were consistently focused on improving learning for pupils at all stages. This included strong links with the church, and other associated schools. Of particular note was the very close partnership working with the neighbouring non-denominational school, Houston Primary School. The School Board and PTA were very supportive of the school's work. Staff provided parents with informative leaflets on pupils' learning, areas of the curriculum, and expected outcomes for pupils in mathematics and English language. Parents were fully informed about the work of the school through monthly newsletters, the website and an extensive range of informal and formal meetings and events. They were regularly consulted on the work of the school and had been consulted on sensitive health issues. Teachers provided parents with high quality written progress reports and met with parents to discuss their children's progress twice each year. The school had strong links with local businesses through a range of enterprise activities. Pupils took part each year in the Houston gala day, the agricultural show and Kirk Carnival.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Fillan's Primary School provided a very high standard of education for pupils. Approaches to learning and teaching were very good and standards of pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics were very high. Pupils were enthusiastic and confident learners, they had a very positive attitude to the improvements made to their learning. All staff were highly committed to the school and demonstrated high levels of quality teamwork. This included effective approaches to identify and share good practice. Approaches to school improvement were well embedded and focused on providing high quality learning experiences for all pupils.

The headteacher's leadership was outstanding. She provided very strong, focused leadership for learning. She had a clear vision for the school and led improvements that ensured pupils received very high quality learning experiences. She had successfully created a very strong team approach amongst staff and pupils to help achieve very high standards. She organised curriculum time to build on the strengths and talents of staff. Through this approach she developed their leadership qualities which enhanced pupils' progress across a range of curricular areas. She was very well supported by a depute headteacher, principal teacher, all teaching and support

staff. Together, the hardworking staff provided outstanding leadership for learning in their areas of responsibility. Staff demonstrated strong commitment and pride in leading school improvements. They worked very effectively together and continuously learned from each other which impacted positively on pupils at all stages of the school. The senior managers used formal and informal approaches effectively to monitor the quality of learning and teaching. These approaches set very high expectations and ensured consistently high quality experiences for pupils. Pupils' progress and levels of attainment were very carefully tracked. Staff used these systems to take very effective action to address difficulties pupils were experiencing and enable all pupils to achieve appropriately high standards. The school had outstanding approaches to improving its work which involved parents, staff and pupils. Self-evaluation was fully embedded into the planning and quality improvement processes. This impact on pupils' learning experiences was rigorously monitored. St Fillan's Primary School was very well placed to continue to provide high quality learning experiences for its pupils.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education through:

- continuing to ensure that all tasks are suitably challenging and consistently meet the needs of all pupils.

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.

Elizabeth C Cole
HM Inspector

9 October 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	very good
The teaching process	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	very good

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

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

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

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.

<p>What parents thought the school did well</p>	<p>What parents think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents felt the school stimulated and challenged their children. • Teacher's were good at letting them know of their children's strengths and weaknesses. • Parents' evenings were helpful and informative. • The school dealt effectively with inappropriate behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
<p>What pupils thought the school did well</p>	<p>What pupils think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly. • Teachers helped them when they were having difficulty with class work. • The school was good at helping sort things out when they were upset. • The school helped them to keep healthy and safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
<p>What staff thought the school did well</p>	<p>What staff think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was effective communication amongst staff and between senior managers. • Staff felt involved in the decision-making processes and training time was used effectively. • The school dealt effectively with bullying and standards of behaviour were consistently upheld in the school. • 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

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