

**Arkleston Primary School  
Renfrew  
Renfrewshire Council  
18 October 2005**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Key strengths</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. How well are pupils supported?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. How good is the environment for learning?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7. Improving the school</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Indicators of quality</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>How can you contact us?</b>	<b>9</b>

## **1. Background**

Arkleston Primary School was inspected in May 2005 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 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 parents.

The school serves an area of Renfrew. At the time of the inspection the roll was 382. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

## **2. Key strengths**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The high quality of pupils' learning experiences and the effectiveness of classroom assistants in supporting pupils' learning.
- Pupil attainment in reading and mathematics.
- A productive and positive ethos and strong pastoral care.
- Links with parents, other schools and the local community.
- The very effective management team.

## **3. What are the views of parents and carers, 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 and carers were positive about all aspects of school life. They liked the behaviour management system in the school. They felt that their children enjoyed being at school and found the work stimulating and challenging. They felt welcomed in the school and were proud of it. Pupils enjoyed their lessons and felt very involved in learning. The pupil council felt valued and listened to by the staff. Pupils had strong reservations about the changes in the school lunch menus. Many pupils and parents

noted and very much appreciated the pastoral role of the depute headteacher. Staff were highly positive about all aspects of the school and enjoyed working in it. They, along with parents and carers, thought that it was well led.

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

##### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

Teachers provided pupils with appropriate and well balanced learning experiences. Across the school, teachers made effective use of available teaching time to raise pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics. However, aspects of the English language programme were not sufficiently well planned to provide pupils with clear progression in their learning. The health education programme also lacked structure and pupils' experiences in this curricular area were too infrequent. Staff gave good attention to developing pupils' personal and social skills across all curricular areas. At several stages, pupils had regular opportunities to develop skills in the use of information and communications technology (ICT), including the use of digital cameras and video. However, this was not consistent across the school. Staff provided a good quality physical education (PE) programme at all stages. The school had successfully developed enterprise activities, for example at P6 through the production of the school show. Overall, the quality of teaching was good and staff worked well together at each stage. Teachers worked effectively with pupils in class, group and individual situations and most used praise effectively to motivate pupils and build their confidence. Most shared the purposes of lessons clearly with pupils and encouraged independent learning. They made effective use of questioning and discussion to promote thinking and learning. There was scope to increase the range and variety of homework activities.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was very good. Across the school, teachers had established a stimulating and challenging learning environment. Pupils were highly motivated and applied themselves well in their classwork. They confidently took responsibility for aspects of their own learning. They demonstrated very good skills in thinking things through for themselves and in discussing issues and ideas with others. At all stages, pupils benefited from regular and well planned opportunities to work together and learn from each other. For example, in P7, pupils co-operated well in groups to present information about their recent residential trip. At P1 and P2 pupils used play activities well to experiment with art and craft materials including painting and making models.

Across the school, pupils demonstrated self-confidence and positive attitudes towards others. They willingly took on additional responsibilities. Through the pupil council, pupils contributed effectively to the school's decision making process. This had included improving the tuck shop. Pupils were developing skills in active citizenship, caring for the community and regularly raising funds for charity. The school was making good progress towards becoming a health promoting school. Across the school, pupils were developing their sports skills through extra-curricular activities, including lunchtime yoga sessions, girls' and boys' football, and activities on the new playground trim-trail. Pupils had achieved success in cross-country running competitions. The school had participated in the national 'Building Bridges in

Literacy' project with their local secondary school and had successfully increased pupil confidence and skills by tackling challenging tasks.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. In recent years, there had been a steady improvement in the level of pupils' attainment in reading and writing. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels and were making good progress in their classwork. Pupils who needed additional support were also progressing well towards their learning targets. Pupils' skills in listening and talking were very good. They listened well to instructions and talked confidently to adults and each other about a range of topics. In group discussions they showed awareness of the feelings and views of others and by P7 had a clear understanding of talking to an audience. Throughout the school, pupils read with fluency and good expression. They demonstrated an enthusiasm for reading for enjoyment and tackling challenging texts. At all stages, pupils were making good progress in writing. They wrote well for a variety of purposes and made good use of punctuation and structure. Pupils in P7 were capable of producing more extended pieces of writing and across the school, pupils needed to be aware of their learning targets in writing.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of the pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good. Levels of attainment showed an improving trend over the last three years. Almost all pupils were attaining appropriate levels in all aspects of mathematics. Most pupils coped well with classwork and had a sound grasp of mathematical processes. Pupils with additional support needs were making steady progress. Across the school, pupils could interpret information from a range of graphs appropriate to their stage. At all stages, pupils were developing secure skills in written calculations, including working with decimals. They responded promptly and accurately in oral mental calculations. However, pupils were not always able to discuss the strategies they had used. Pupils demonstrated good abilities to give the correct change using money and in measurement. Across the school pupils had a sound knowledge of shape. They used well developed strategies for problem solving. Not all pupils used computers effectively to develop their learning in mathematics and pupils did not have regular opportunities to practise and develop these skills.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

The school provided a very high quality of pastoral care. Staff knew pupils very well. The depute headteacher ran an effective and well established 'drop in' time for pupils who wanted support. Pupils had a clear understanding of what they should do if they had any concerns. The home link worker contributed sensitively to a range of activities, including a lunch club, which supported the development of social skills and increased pupils' self-esteem. Appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure pupils' care and welfare. All staff had a good understanding of child protection procedures.

Staff made very good provision for pupils with differing abilities and pupils benefited from stimulating and challenging activities. Classroom assistants were deployed very effectively to support pupils and they made a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning

experiences. The school had effective procedures for identifying and assessing the needs of pupils who needed extra support. Staff provided appropriate support for pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning and prepared suitable individualised educational programmes which were shared with pupils and parents. Pupils receiving additional support were making good progress towards the learning targets set for them. There were well-established arrangements in place to support pupils transferring from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. Teachers made effective use of the class areas to promote pupils' independent learning skills and to support a wide variety of activities, such as learning through play. The school building could be accessed by all pupils and visitors and security arrangements were appropriate. Throughout the school, there were interesting displays of pupils' work. The interior of the building was well maintained and cleaned to a high standard. Exterior brickwork needed attention. There was limited space to hold meetings and for support agencies to use. The school had no changing facilities for PE and pupils had to change in toilets. The playground and garden area had been very well developed by the school and provided very good facilities for pupils' social and physical play. However, the grass playing field surface was very uneven.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The overall climate of the school was happy and productive. Visitors were warmly welcomed and made to feel a part of the life of the school. Staff and pupils had very good working relationships. Pupils worked very well with each other. Staff had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Pupils were developing positive attitudes about diversity and an awareness of the needs of others. Learning about fairness and equality, including race equality, was an important feature of the monthly 'quiet assemblies'. Pupils had regular opportunities to take part in religious observance supported by the school chaplain.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school's partnership with parents and the community were very good. The school actively encouraged parents to be partners in their children's learning. It provided regular, helpful information to parents on their children's progress and information about the curriculum. The school also kept parents up to date with school events through well presented newsletters. The School Board and PTA were very supportive of the school. Parents organised the sale of school uniforms, and ran a crèche during parent interview evenings. They also assisted with cycling proficiency training. Renfrew Community Learning staff ran well attended classes for parents in school. The school had developed positive links with the local shopping centre and supermarket to promote the children's awareness of the world of work. Parents had appropriate opportunities to view resources used for sensitive issues in health education.

## 7. Improving the school

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

Arkleston Primary School provided a very good educational experience for pupils and was very well placed to make further improvements. Staff were motivated and skilled and worked very well together to successfully promote and support pupils' learning. Pupils had access to a wide range of learning opportunities and their achievements across a range of areas were very good. The headteacher had been in post for four months. She was very committed to the school and its community and to her own continuing professional development. In her short time in school she had started to develop a very positive relationship with staff and had identified their strengths. She had also fostered very good relationships with pupils and parents and was respected by them. She had a clear vision for taking the school forward. She had placed a strong focus on putting the quality of pupils' learning experiences and achievements at the centre of school life and in involving pupils in decision making. The headteacher led the management team very well and delegated responsibilities wisely. She was very well supported by the very effective deputy headteachers and principal teachers.

Senior managers used a range of formal and informal approaches to monitor and evaluate the quality of its work. They had identified the need to develop a more systematic approach to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching. The system for tracking pupils' progress was very effective and could now be extended to monitor achievements in other areas of the curriculum.

**Main points for action**

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- provide pupils with well planned and learning experiences in information and communications technology and health education;
- build on existing good practice in teaching to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for pupils; and
- continue to develop a more focused and systematic approach 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 and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Susan Duff  
HM Inspector

18 October 2005

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership

### **We judged the following to be good**

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Accommodation and facilities
- Self-evaluation

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- No aspects were found to be in this category

### **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.

<b>What pleased parents and carers most</b>	<b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents' evenings and school reports provided helpful information on their children's progress.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of the children.</li> <li>• If concerns were raised the school did something about it.</li> <li>• The school was well led and had a good reputation in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents wanted more information about their child's strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• A few parents felt their child needed more encouragement by teachers.</li> <li>• They wanted more information about the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased pupils most</b>	<b>What pupils would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They felt safe and well looked after in school.</li> <li>• They enjoyed having a say in deciding how to make the school better.</li> <li>• The school was good at sorting things out if they were upset.</li> <li>• Teachers helped them when they had difficulties with classwork.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils.</li> <li>• They felt they got too much homework.</li> <li>• Not all pupils were treated fairly.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased staff most</b>	<b>What staff would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, staff were pleased about all aspects of the school's work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few support staff did not feel respected by some pupils.</li> </ul>

## **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 Leisure, 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](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

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

### **Our complaints procedure**

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 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. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk)

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