

**Carronrange School
Larbert
Falkirk Council
23 January 2007**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	2
4. How good is the environment for learning?	7
5. Leading and improving the school	9
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	11
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	12
How can you contact us?	14

1. Background

Carronrange School was inspected in September and October 2006 as part of a national sample of provision for pupils with additional support needs. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. Inspectors evaluated how well the school promoted achievement for all pupils, taking into account the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met by the curriculum and teaching. They also analysed pupils' performance in examinations, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on the quality of learning in English, mathematics, social subjects, technical education and personal and social education (PSE).

HM Inspectors observed learning and achievement in lessons and other contexts and examined pupils' work. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents¹ and pupils and to all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils, including the student council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

Carronrange School is a non-denominational special school for pupils age 11 to 18 in Falkirk Council's area. Pupils attending the school have additional support needs arising from a wide range of moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 138. Almost all pupils had a Record of Needs. The school was preparing to open coordinated support plans for 36 pupils. All pupils received free school meals, in line with Falkirk Council's policy for schools for pupils with additional support needs. Pupils' attendance was broadly in line with secondary schools nationally.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' courtesy, very good behaviour and hard work.
- Relationships between staff and pupils, and teamwork among staff.
- Celebration of pupils' achievements and imaginative use of a range of forms of accreditation.
- Pupils' access to a high quality curriculum.

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

- The effectiveness with which pupils were prepared for life after school.
- High morale and the positive, immediate impact of the new headteacher on the quality of pupils' experience.

3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?

To evaluate how well the school promoted achievement for all, inspectors considered the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met through the curriculum and teaching. They evaluated the effectiveness of the school in promoting the learning and personal development of all pupils in lessons and in other broader contexts. They also considered the standards attained in specific aspects of learning, such as those which are measured by school and national assessments, and by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) awards.

Curriculum

The curriculum was good overall with some important strengths. It provided an appropriate structure and a broad and balanced experience for pupils with a wide range of additional support needs, and good opportunities for choice. Particular features included the following.

- The school had extended the length of its day to match that of mainstream schools, by offering a range of lunchtime clubs. A few of these clubs did not yet provide clear learning outcomes.
- Staff had made progress in adopting a range of formats for accrediting pupils' achievements at S3 to S6. In addition to its growing use of National Qualifications (NQs) across a broader range of Access provision, the school made judicious use of alternative frameworks including the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).
- The curriculum included aspects such as citizenship, the environment and education for work and enterprise which enhanced pupils' social skills. The behaviour and attendance of some pupils had improved through involvement in the Active Steps programme of outdoor education.
- The school had formed strong links with its local college, extending the curriculum and supporting pupils' development of key social skills and employability.
- A few pupils had benefited from links to the neighbouring mainstream secondary school but this aspect was underdeveloped.
- The S1/S2 programme in personal and social education (PSE) did not use a broad enough range of active learning approaches including information and communications

technology (ICT). Pupils in S3 to S6 were making good progress on units at Access levels 1, 2 and 3. At S5/S6, a well-planned programme of work experience developed pupils' work-related skills.

- The school conducted an annual review of its curriculum but pupils' views were not yet properly taken into account. Too little time was allocated to help pupils develop relevant skills in social subjects.

Teaching and meeting pupils' needs

Teachers were generally skilled in their different roles. Some acted as 'core teachers' for language, mathematics and personal and social development. Others offered specialist subject programmes. The quality of teaching was good overall but there were inconsistencies. Teaching in the lessons observed ranged from excellent to adequate. A few teachers made good use of direct questioning and interactive teaching. Issues included the need to share skills and balance duties among core and subject teachers, and enhance the capacity of all staff to meet the needs of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. Teachers worked skilfully and positively with pupils and used praise well to motivate them. In most classes, they provided good opportunities for pupils to build on prior learning. They gave clear instructions and explanations, using a wide range of communication approaches, including signing and symbols as appropriate. Most teachers shared lesson aims with pupils and highlighted what was expected from them. However, not enough time was allocated at the end of most lessons to consolidate pupils' learning. Teachers were aware of pupils' needs and learning tasks and activities were generally appropriate. A few lessons were too slow, and insufficiently challenging for some pupils. Most pupils were following appropriate targets set within individualised educational programmes (IEPs) although these were sometimes too general to be used to assess pupils' progress in learning. Pupils in S5/S6 received good support for their work experience placements. Support assistants worked particularly well with pupils with complex additional support needs. Partner agencies, including therapy staff and educational psychologists, made effective contributions to supporting pupils, and were providing helpful support in the preparation of coordinated support plans. The school had very good arrangements in place to support pupils transferring from P7 into secondary and when moving on to post-school options.

Learning and personal development

Most pupils were making good progress towards becoming successful learners. Almost all were attentive and tried hard to answer questions. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties responded well to very effective individual teaching techniques. Almost all pupils focused well on their tasks. Some showed independence in taking a task to completion but many required sustained support and encouragement from staff. Most pupils clearly demonstrated their pleasure, enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning in active lessons such as those in music and physical education.

At all stages, pupils were making very good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Most were making good progress towards achieving appropriate targets in personal and social development. Some long term targets in IEPs were not specific enough and did not support pupils' progression. Pupils recorded key achievements and experiences in personal progress files. Pupils with severe and complex additional support needs were developing a good understanding of personal care routines and relationships. Pupils extended their skills and applied them in different contexts through effective links with local

colleges and the wider community. Almost all pupils were very well behaved and well motivated to learn. They were developing positive self esteem and confidence in the supportive environment. Pupils were tolerant of individual differences. By S6, almost all pupils had achieved personal and social skills appropriate to their abilities.

English

Teachers structured their lessons to meet individuals' needs, gave very clear instructions and explanations and used questioning well. They did not consistently review and consolidate learning at the end of lessons. Teachers used praise to confirm pupils' responses and to develop their ideas. The pace of learning in a few lessons was not sufficiently challenging.

All pupils were hard working and almost all concentrated well and remained on task. They listened well and answered thoughtfully. They responded well to opportunities for discussion and collaborative work but had too few opportunities to do so. Pupils in S4 prepared relevant questions about rainforests. A few pupils were highly skilled in the use of sign when responding to questioning by adults.

Learning and teaching were good overall. Meeting needs was adequate. Attainment was good overall. Particular features included the following.

- At all stages and especially from S3 to S6, pupils were making steady progress. Most pupils met their personal learning targets.
- Almost all pupils with complex additional support needs were making good progress in language and communication, expressing ideas, identifying objects of interest and participating well in group activities.
- Most pupils with moderate learning difficulties were making good progress in reading and writing skills.
- All pupils presented for NQ units at Access levels 1-3 had achieved passes.

Mathematics

Teachers were well organised and provided effective support for individual pupils. Overall, they explained work clearly, interacted well with pupils and used praise to encourage them. They did not always use questioning to encourage pupils to think, or make well-planned or sufficient use of ICT. Activities were varied but some relied too heavily on commercial resources which did not offer sufficient support and challenge for all pupils.

Pupils were well-behaved in class and completed tasks willingly. They cooperated well in pairs and groups. The pace of learning varied across classes. Overall, pupils had too few opportunities to apply their skills in real-life situations. Pupils were particularly motivated when they were actively involved in practical tasks. Pupils were developing effective money skills through enterprise topics. At all stages, pupils applied mathematical skills in other curricular areas including science, home economics and technical education. Overall, learning and teaching were good. Meeting needs was adequate. Attainment was good overall. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, most pupils were making good progress in achieving the targets which had been set for them in their IEPs, but some targets were not appropriately matched to their individual needs.
- Almost all pupils from S3 to S6 were achieving NQ units at Access levels 1, 2 and 3.
- At S5/S6, almost all pupils were achieving ASDAN awards.

Social subjects

Lessons were well structured and used a range of very effective teaching approaches. Teachers made skilful use of praise and specific positive feedback to motivate pupils. ICT was used very effectively, for example, for recording pupils' achievements and field trips using digital cameras. Support assistants and cooperative teachers met pupils' needs well. However, the quality of cooperative teaching was not consistently high.

Pupils responded well to the brisk pace of teaching, clear explanations and supportive questioning. Almost all pupils were motivated and hardworking. They participated well when given responsibility, such as identifying their local community using satellite mapping software. Pupils enjoyed working on practical tasks.

Teaching and learning were very good. Meeting needs was good. Attainment was very good overall. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, pupils were performing well in their classwork, for example, making good use of maps for different purposes and recognising different roles played by people in their school community.
- At S3/S4, all pupils achieved Access 2 units in social subjects and could discuss key features of their local community with classmates, staff and visitors.
- Pupils showed good knowledge about different types of housing when visiting a number of local businesses.
- Pupils showed developing skills in mapping, and in measuring and recording the weather.

Technical education

Teaching was mostly effective. Explanations and instructions were generally clear, and in most lessons teaching was patient and resourceful. Staff provided conscientious support for individual pupils and took some steps to recognise their different needs. Some questioning was particularly skilful, targeted carefully to provide appropriate challenge for individuals. Some tasks, including some worksheet-based activities, had limited value. Staff met pupils' needs for a range of technological experiences adequately, but there was scope for better matching of tasks to their individual abilities.

Pupils were attentive during teaching and, when appropriately supported, kept well to their tasks. Most openly showed their enjoyment of practical craft activities. At times, the pace

of pupils' learning was too slow and they made very limited progress during individual lessons.

Learning and teaching were good, and meeting needs was adequate. Attainment was good overall. Particular features included the following.

- Pupils were achieving good standards in craftwork at all stages. By S4, some could produce high quality craftsmanship in their woodwork projects.
- Pupils showed some useful knowledge of important aspects of technology such as the tools, machines and processes they used in class.
- Pupils demonstrated valuable graphical skills, using a range of manual techniques and computer aided drafting approaches.
- One pupil had won an award for craftsmanship, in open competition with pupils from many other schools including mainstream secondary schools.

Attainment

Pupils' attainment was good at all stages from S1 to S6. Most pupils made good progress in their programmes, achieving targets which had been set for them in language and communication, mathematics and number skills, and personal and learning skills. There remained scope for pupils to perform better overall, through being given more appropriately challenging tasks.

Many pupils were attaining certification through NQs and across a wider spectrum of qualifications. Pupils' attainments were increasingly certificated through the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) at Access levels 2 and 3. Pupils were also gaining growing numbers of awards at Access level 1. Many pupils gained recognition for:

- progress in independent living skills through ASDAN;
- knowledge and skills in environmental aspects through the John Muir Award;
- achievements in leading sports activity through the Community Leadership Sports Award; and
- accomplishments in outdoor education through the Active Steps programme.

The school continued to explore approaches which provided better recognition of the achievements of pupils with more complex difficulties.

Information on the subjects inspected is given earlier in the report. Particular features of pupils' achievements in the curriculum included the following.

- In art and design, pupils had produced stimulating and imaginative work in tasks relating to the ‘chill out’ social area.
- Pupils performed well in home economics, particularly in developing skills in independent living including cooking. Pupils concentrated well during lessons, and showed enjoyment and enthusiasm for their activities.
- Pupils in S3 showed important skills in ICT, showing a good understanding of key points in the review which staff carried out at the end of lessons.
- Pupils’ achievements in music were impressive. They were exceptionally well motivated and showed good skills when learning pieces for public performance.
- Pupils performed enthusiastically and skilfully in physical education activities, promoting a healthy lifestyle. In recent years, several pupils had represented the school in athletics and sports at local, national and international levels.
- Pupils showed good knowledge and skills in science topics relating to health. They carried out tasks diligently and carefully, with close attention to health and safety.

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school provided high quality pastoral care. Policies on personal safety and anti-bullying provided staff with a good framework to meet pupils’ personal, social and emotional needs. The programme for PSE promoted key skills of healthy living. Staff had all received helpful briefings and were familiar with child protection procedures, although their skills needed to be updated more frequently. Staff were caring and committed. Pupils’ needs for intimate care were handled sensitively and skilfully, with clear respect for their dignity. Pupils felt that staff knew them and their needs well, and they felt cared for, happy and secure in the school. Clearly established daily routines helped ensure that the needs of some pupils for regularity and predictability were well met. The school was making progress implementing national advice to improve pupils’ diet and health and towards achieving Health Promoting Schools status. Staff had taken effective steps to influence and improve pupils’ eating habits at intervals and lunchtimes. Meals were of good quality and served in an attractive dining environment. Scope for further improvement included adjustments to meet fully the Scottish Nutrient Standards for School Lunches and the range of pupils’ needs, including the needs of those requiring special diets.
Quality of	The accommodation was very good. The modern facilities were well

Aspect	Comment
accommodation and facilities	suited to pupils' needs and provided a safe, attractive and effective environment for learning. Class bases were bright and spacious, but some rooms suffered from poor temperature control. Enhancing features included a swimming pool, a fitness suite and a hydrotherapy pool. The attractive library was well used. Pupils had access to very good social areas. Facilities for ICT were very good but some staff did not make sufficient use of them. Some of the school's specialist facilities, such as the sensory room, the retreat and some outdoor areas including the sensory garden needed to be used more effectively.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	The supportive climate and positive relationships promoted effective learning and personal development. Most staff had appropriately high expectations of pupils' achievement. The school encouraged, rewarded and celebrated pupils' achievements. The school incentive scheme promoted healthy lifestyles, and encouraged pupils to attend, behave, work well and aspire to high achievements. The very effective internal award scheme rewarded effort, achievement and behaviour and offered opportunities for recognition and progression. Staff and pupils showed clear respect for diversity in the school and its community. The school raised significant sums for charity. School policies provided an effective framework to guide staff and ensure equality and fairness. The school had developed a helpful policy on race equality and planned soon to provide staff with further training.
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnerships were good overall, with some very good features. Particular strengths included the school's relationships with the School Board and a wide range of agencies. The wide catchment area presented specific challenges, some of which would be addressed by the local authority's imminent appointment of a parent support office to complement the contribution from the Larbert Integrated Learning Community team. The school communicated well with parents. They expressed their appreciation for frequent information about pupils' progress, informative school reports and well-organised parents' evenings. The school was involving parents appropriately in its preparation of coordinated support plans.

5. Leading and improving the school

Carronrange School provided an effective education. The curriculum met pupils' learning needs well in most respects. The supportive climate was effective in promoting enjoyable learning experiences and good achievement. The quality of pupils' learning was particularly strong in some departments and should form the basis for further improvements in learning, teaching and meeting needs, for example for pupils with complex learning difficulties.

Leadership was effective. The headteacher had been in post for only six weeks, prior to which she had been depute headteacher in the school. The vacant post resulting from her promotion was due to be filled within the next few weeks. She had demonstrated very skilful leadership, and had already won the confidence of staff and parents. She had made a strong start in sharing with them a convincing and ambitious vision for the school. She had made significant progress in developing teamwork, improving communication and identifying the range of challenges for realising the school's ambitions for pupils. The second depute headteacher was absent from the school at the time of the inspection. She had achieved a significantly positive impact on the school and provided high quality, conscientious support for the headteacher. The education authority had appointed a senior manager from another school as acting depute, to increase the school's management team. The six principal teachers made valuable contributions to the work of the school. Each brought important skills and positive influence to their areas of responsibility. Collectively, with the new headteacher, they were an increasingly effective team. There remained some inconsistencies in how they worked with different teachers and subject areas, including in relation to quality assurance. The school's efforts to involve support staff effectively in decision making had not yet been fully successful. Good leadership was evident in the ways in which the school had pursued continuous improvement, and in the well-designed curriculum framework which ensured a broad experience for pupils. The school needed to continue to build on proven successes, including the impact of the Active Steps programme, to integrate the benefits long-term into the curriculum. A number of staff took lead roles in aspects of the school's work including the chairmanship of working groups to develop areas of the curriculum. Pupils also showed some important leadership qualities. These included their work in the student council, such as the lunchtime 'surgeries' at which they made themselves available for consultation. Some pupils showed effective leadership through the Community Sports Leadership Award, developing their capacity to make a contribution to their community.

The school had made some progress in implementing approaches to support continuing improvement. The new headteacher had a clear, detailed appreciation of key steps necessary for the school's progress. Senior managers had made an important start to developing a system of classroom visits to monitor the quality of learning and teaching and identify good practice. They recognised that these visits needed to become more focused, rigorous and consistent to achieve continuing improvement. The school's arrangements for monitoring forward plans and pupils' progress towards their targets formed a good basis for the development of more effective approaches. Staff showed commitment to extending their skills through continuous professional development, although this needed to be better focused on the school's priorities for improving aspects of learning and teaching.

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 points for action.

Main points for action

- In order to meet pupils' needs better, the school should continue to improve learning and teaching, ensuring it is more closely matched to pupils' additional support needs, and using a wider range of approaches including ICT.
- The specific roles of core teachers and subject specialists, including their partnerships in cooperative teaching, should be reviewed to build on best practice and to share expertise.
- The school should improve the effectiveness of its approaches to self-evaluation to enhance the quality of learning and teaching, and share good practice more effectively.
- Senior managers should continue to work with principal teachers to clarify their roles in leading and managing in the school, and to achieve greater consistency in their work with teachers and support staff.

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.

Bill Geddes
HM Inspector

23 January 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The following quality indicators have been used in the inspection process to contribute to the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school in promoting learning and achievement for all pupils.

Section 3. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	good
Meeting needs	adequate
Overall quality of attainment: S1/S2	good
Overall quality of attainment: S3/S4	good
Overall quality of attainment: S5/S6	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Personal and social development	very good

Section 4. How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	very good
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	very good
Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community	good

Section 5. 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 the judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

The following provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered in the inspection and comments are included as appropriate throughout the report.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents all thought that the school had a good reputation in the community, staff made them feel welcome in the school and accommodation was kept in good order. • Pupils enjoyed being at school and were encouraged to work to the best of their ability, and teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children and there was mutual respect between pupils and staff. • Parents' evenings were informative and school reports provided helpful information about their children's progress. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents raised no major concerns.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed school and staff helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could, told them how to improve their learning and helped them when they had difficulties. • Staff were good at telling them how well they were getting on with their work and when they did something well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a quarter of pupils thought that the behaviour of pupils could be improved.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teachers and support staff believed the school was well led, and liked working in it. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of the pupils and there was mutual respect between staff and pupils. • Staff were aware of the school's procedures for child protection and dealt effectively with any instances of bullying. • The school worked hard to ensure good relations with the local community. • Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment and communicated clearly to parents the standard of work expected from pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a quarter of staff felt that communication among staff could be improved. • Around a fifth of teachers and support staff felt that time for continuous professional development was not used effectively. • Almost half of support staff felt they did not have good opportunities to be involved in the decision making process.

How can you contact us?

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Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, 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, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee, DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about provision for pupils with additional support needs

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of provision for pupils with additional support needs, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG.

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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, 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.

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, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail ask@spso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spso.org.uk.

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