

**Charleston Primary School
Dundee City Council
29 August 2006**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils supported?	4
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Improving the school	5
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	8
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	9
How can you contact us?	10

1. Background

Charleston Primary School was inspected in May 2006 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 representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents¹.

Charleston Primary school is a non-denominational school serving an area in the west of the city of Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 188, including 67 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was well below the national average.

The work of the nursery class was not included in this inspection.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- A welcoming and inclusive ethos for all pupils.
- The positive relationships between staff and pupils and the attention paid by staff to pupils' care and welfare.
- The school's arrangements for celebrating pupils' successes and achievements.
- Very effective teamwork between a range of agencies and the school to support pupils and their families.
- The quality of accommodation.

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.

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 small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the work of the school. They felt their children enjoyed being at school and found work stimulating and challenging. A significant minority of parents did not feel the school had a good reputation in the local community. Most pupils enjoyed being at school. They felt that teachers were good at telling them how they were getting on with their work and letting them know how they could improve their learning. However, just over half expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour. Around a quarter felt that staff did not deal effectively with bullying. Teaching staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school. Ancillary staff felt that communication between staff could be better and that more productive use could be made of their training time.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was adequate. Across the school, teachers allocated additional time to English language and mathematics as part of the school's approach to improving attainment. In addition, additional time was given over to environmental studies, the expressive arts and health, to promote healthy living and social skills. These initiatives had begun to have a positive impact on attainment and pupils' attitudes. However, weaknesses in timetabling of these activities did not always enhance pupils' learning effectively. Visiting specialist teachers and visitors to the school enabled pupils to develop a range of important skills through taking part in activities, including fitness and language work. Staff planned a range of experiences for pupils to develop skills in citizenship, healthy living and Eco School initiatives. It was still too early to effectively evaluate the impact of these experiences. The overall quality of teaching was good. Most teachers shared the purpose of lessons well and gave clear explanations. There were some examples of very good interactive teaching when teachers used questioning effectively to engage pupils in discussion. However, this good practice was not sufficiently widespread. In too many instances, questions were directed at the recall of factual information and were not used to check pupils' understanding. Staff made good use of praise to encourage pupils' and to recognise good work. Although homework was given regularly, it lacked variety and challenge and was frequently not returned. Teachers were beginning to devote more time to the development of pupils' skills and knowledge in information and communications technology (ICT). However, ICT was not yet sufficiently used to enhance teaching in all curricular areas.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was adequate. A small number of pupils at the middle and upper stages frequently talked over others and interrupted the teaching process. This adversely affected the pace of learning. At the early stages, pupils were developing good early literacy and numeracy skills and worked well together in collaborative tasks. Despite being offered a range of stimulating and challenging tasks, too many pupils in the middle and upper stages were passive listeners or watchers. Some were only willing to undertake those tasks which did not require much thought or effort. Although teachers gave pupils feedback about the quality of their work, too many pupils were often unclear about what they needed to do to improve. Pupils responded well to opportunities to take on

responsibilities and older pupils acted as ‘buddies’ to P1 pupils and played with them at playtimes. The pupil council was clear about its role and had represented the views of their classmates at council meetings. They had been instrumental in setting up and implementing a series of playground rules which had had a positive effect on pupil behaviour. Pupils’ achievements both in and out of school were recognised and promoted in class and in school assemblies. Throughout the school, pupils had a well developed understanding of the benefits to be gained from a healthy diet. Pupils at all stages showed a very good understanding of the need to exercise. Many pupils responded enthusiastically and happily took part in the wide range of after school activity based clubs as part of their personal and social development.

English language

Over the last three years, pupils’ attainment in reading and writing had improved. However, the overall quality of attainment in English language was weak. Most pupils at P4, but only the majority at P3 and P7 were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading. Most pupils at P3 and P4 but only a minority at P7 achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in writing. The school was unable to provide reliable evidence of pupils’ attainment in listening and talking. Pupils who were experiencing difficulties were effectively supported by teachers and non-teaching staff and were making progress in their coursework. Pupils at all stages were keen to talk about their activities but skills in taking part in structured discussions were not well developed. Many pupils at P1 and P2 were developing good literacy skills. Pupils in P6 and P7 were enjoying learning about Scots dialect. By P7, most pupils could talk about their favourite authors and books they had read. The quality of pupils’ handwriting and presentation of work was too variable. Many lacked skills in writing at length for a variety of purposes.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was weak. Most pupils at P3, but only the majority at P4 and a minority at the upper stages were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Over the last four years, the numbers exceeding these levels had risen. Coursework tasks and activities were not always appropriate for all pupils, and as a result some pupils did not attain as well as they could have. Across the stages, most could interpret graphs and charts. Skills in organising and displaying data using ICT were not well developed. By P7, a majority of pupils were able to carry out written calculations accurately and work with percentages, fractions and decimals. They had a good knowledge of angles, shape and symmetry. However, some pupils’ knowledge and understanding of place value needed further development. Pupils at all stages, used a narrow range of strategies in problem-solving and enquiry. They had too little practice in applying strategies in a variety of problem-solving contexts and as a result their skills in this aspect were not well developed.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The school provided a very good level of pastoral care for pupils. All staff knew pupils well and were very sensitive to their individual physical, social and emotional needs. Most pupils felt safe, and were confident that any incidents of bullying would be dealt with quickly and effectively. Almost all felt that they could discuss sensitive issues with members of staff. Effective procedures to deal with child protection issues, Internet access and personal safety issues were in place. The school promoted healthy lifestyles through the health education programme, the highly effective Breakfast Club and a range of activities outwith school hours. The school was very well supported in this by the active-schools co-ordinator, the visiting PE teacher and local sports clubs. Well planned and effective arrangements were in place to support the transition of children from nursery into P1 and for P7 pupils moving to secondary education.

Overall, the school met pupils' needs well. Staff, including support for learning teachers and classroom assistants, provided effective additional support for pupils' learning in a variety of contexts. This included co-operative teaching and tutorial work with individuals and small groups. They created appropriate individualised educational programmes for pupils with additional support needs. The programmes had clear long and short term targets and progress towards the targets was monitored regularly. The nursery nurse provided very good literacy support to teachers and pupils in P1. A wide range of agencies, including social work, Charleston Family Centre, educational psychologists, speech and occupational therapists and the home school support service worked successfully with the school to address the wide range of pupil needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation was very good. Classrooms were spacious, bright and attractive. The well-equipped gym had appropriate changing facilities. The separate dining hall offered bright accommodation. Very good use was made of surplus accommodation to provide facilities for teaching ICT, art, design technology and music. Arrangements to ensure pupils' safety within the school were very effective. The school building and surrounding play areas were kept very clean and tidy. There was no disabled access to the upper storeys of the building.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Pupils and staff were very proud of the school and identified strongly with it. Relationships throughout the school were very good. The behaviour of the majority of pupils in class and outdoors was good overall and pupils worked and played well together. Most pupils enjoyed being at school. Staff needed to set higher expectations of pupils' attainment and encourage all pupils to meet these expectations. Pupils at the upper stages successfully provided support to others in the playground. Staff successfully promoted a sense of fairness and mutual respect in all aspects of school life through the frequent use of praise and reward certificates. Assemblies provided regular and motivating opportunities for religious observance and the celebration of pupils' achievements and successes. Staff, pupils and parents raised money for a variety of charities.
Partnership with parents and the community	Although the headteacher and staff worked hard to involve parents and carers in the life of the school they were only partially successful in this goal. Relationships with the PTA were very good and the majority of parents attended parent contact evenings. Information giving evenings, such as writing workshops, were less well attended. Whilst reports to parents on pupils' progress were detailed they did not always give clear enough advice to parents on how pupils could improve the quality of their work. The school worked closely with a number of partner agencies including the Active School Co-ordinator and the Home School Support Service, social work and the educational psychology service.

7. Improving the school

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

Overall, Charleston Primary School provided an adequate educational experience for pupils. There was some good and very good teaching in the school. Staff were caring and committed and staff morale was high. The school's approach to providing a safe and caring environment for all of its pupils was very good. Although the school had made some progress in raising attainment, there was a need to continue to work to improve attainment in English language and mathematics. Whilst pupils' had frequent opportunities to take part in a range of worthwhile activities to broaden and enrich their educational experiences, greater care needed to be taken to ensure that these activities did not unduly disrupt pupils' learning and attainment in literacy and numeracy. Not all pupils had positive attitudes to work and too many were passive learners who were unwilling to undertake work which

they found challenging. As a result too much time was spent trying to engage pupils in classwork and ensuring they worked at an appropriate pace.

Leadership was adequate overall. The headteacher had successfully introduced a number of appropriate initiatives to develop aspects of the curriculum and these had had a beneficial impact on the overall levels of attainment. She now needed to provide a strong lead to staff in establishing a consistent approach to learning and teaching across the school. The deputy headteacher provided a degree of support for the headteacher and had taken a leading role in key curriculum developments such as mathematics and ICT. The senior management team had established a range of formal and informal approaches to monitoring the work of the school and identifying priorities for improvement. This had included visits to classes, monitoring teachers' plans, sampling of pupils' work and the issue of questionnaires. However, this had not always led to identifiable improvements. The senior management team now needed to work more closely with the education authority and staff to raise attainment and ensure that the needs of all pupils were fully met.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to ensure further improvement in the work of the school and to raise achievement for all its pupils. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to improve attainment in English language and in mathematics;
- further improve the quality of learning and teaching, including use of ICT, and develop strategies to ensure that all pupils focus on their work and listen more attentively to their teachers;
- involve all staff in evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and time allocations to further improve pupil attainment; and
- develop better links with parents and carers and more involvement in their children's learning.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

David M Martin
HM Inspector

29 August 2006

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	adequate
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	weak
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	weak

How well are pupils supported?	
Pastoral care	very good
Meeting pupils' needs	good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Accommodation and facilities	very good
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents and the community	good

Improving the school	
Leadership	adequate
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	adequate
Self-evaluation	adequate

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
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"> • Staff made them feel welcome in the school and consulted them on decisions which affected their children. • Staff showed care and concern for their children's care and welfare. • Their children enjoyed being at school, found the work challenging and were encouraged to work to the best of their ability. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the school's reputation in the community.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers told them when they did something well and helped them when they were having difficulties. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could and checked their homework. • All pupils enjoyed being at the school. • The school helped keep them safe and healthy and looked after them well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of some pupils. • All pupils should be treated fairly.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment, showed concern for their care and welfare and liked working in the school. • They worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community and communicated effectively. • They gave both pupils and parents good feedback about pupils' progress. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff had no significant matters they wished to see improved.

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, 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 www.hmie.gov.uk.

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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, 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.

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. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

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