

**Christie Park Primary School
Alexandria
West Dunbartonshire Council**

7 June 2005

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1. Background

Christie Park Primary School was inspected in March 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 the central area of Alexandria. At the time of the inspection the roll was 250. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The well structured curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Courteous and well-behaved pupils.
- Links with parents and the local community.
- Leadership of the management team.
- The quality of pastoral care.

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.

Overall, parents and carers, pupils and staff were very pleased with the work of the school. All parents and carers, and staff interviewed thought the school was well led and that the senior management team was approachable. Parents and carers felt they received useful information on their children's progress from parents' evenings and school reports. All staff enjoyed working in the school and felt that discipline was dealt with effectively. They thought the behaviour of pupils was very good. A few members of support staff did not feel that they had good opportunities to be involved in the

decision making process and wanted more feedback about their own work. Pupils felt safe and well looked after in the school. They thought that teachers expected them to work hard and praised them when they had done something well. A few pupils felt they would like to know more about their own progress.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall structure of the curriculum was very good. It was broad and balanced with additional time being allocated to raise attainment in English language, mathematics and environmental studies. Across all stages pupils were given very good opportunities to develop their skills in science and technology and were able to use these well in practical situations. Very good use was made of the local environment to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) showed a good progression across stages. Very good use was made of the well-equipped ICT suite. At P1 and P2, there was good opportunity for pupils to be active in their learning, for example through play. Skills in citizenship were being developed effectively within the schools programme for personal and social development (PSD). Pupils were developing their knowledge of Scottish language and culture in a variety of activities across the curriculum. Pupils' enterprise skills were well developed. At P4 and P5, pupils had created a company to organise a 'Scottish Day' and those at P7 were engaged enthusiastically in an enterprise project 'Determined To Be Healthy'. The school made effective use of the skills of staff by arranging for them to share their expertise with other classes. Teaching was good with some examples of very good teaching. In most classes there were effective examples of direct teaching. Most teachers shared the purpose of lessons and recapped at the end to check pupils' understanding. Staff made good use of praise to encourage and motivate pupils. Teachers used homework well to support pupils' learning. Assessment information was not always used effectively to ensure pupils made appropriate progress.

Pupils were well motivated and worked hard. They listened attentively to their teachers and participated in good class discussions. They worked well together in groups during writing, problem solving and science lessons. At times, lessons were over-directed and did not allow pupils to work together or be independent in their own learning. At P5, pupils evaluated their own work in technology. Those at the upper stages talked confidently about the importance of using fair tests in science experiments. At P7, pupils showed a good awareness of gender and ageist issues as part of their PSD programme. At all stages, pupils understood a range of health issues and how to promote their own healthy living. Those at P7 were very knowledgeable about food hygiene and demonstrated healthy eating through a series of cookery demonstrations for parents supported by a local chef. Throughout the school, pupils were confident and tuneful singers. Those at P3 had a good knowledge of rhythm and were able to hold simple rhythms in a very controlled way.

Pupils in the upper stages contributed their views on school issues through the effective pupil council. At P6 and P7, pupils were confident in taking on additional

responsibilities such as acting as ‘buddies’ to P1 pupils or acting as playground games monitors. Pupils in P4 had successfully led a school assembly to encourage other pupils to raise money to support a child in Africa. Those at P4 to P7 displayed very effective team work and had developed a sense of audience by being involved in a large-scale musical production for parents and the local community. Pupils’ involvement in these activities helped raise their confidence and self-esteem. Through their participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including an ICT club and various sporting activities, pupils’ personal and social skills had been enhanced.

English language

The overall quality of pupils’ attainment in English language was good. In recent years, the school had maintained good standards of attainment in listening, talking and writing with most pupils achieving appropriate national standards in these aspects. Over the past three years, there had been a steady improvement in standards of reading. Almost all pupils had attained appropriate national levels for their stage in reading and some had achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. At all stages, pupils listened well for information and instructions. They responded competently to questions about texts they had read. However, their skills in listening and talking in group situations were less well developed. Throughout the school, pupils read with fluency and good expression and most demonstrated an enthusiasm for reading for enjoyment. Across the school, pupils were making good progress in writing. They wrote well for a variety of purposes and made good use of punctuation and structure. However they were capable of producing longer pieces of writing with more developed ideas.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good with most pupils achieving national levels of attainment. In recent years, attainment in mathematics had improved. At P2, most pupils were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils who had not achieved national levels were making steady progress in their coursework. However, across all stages some pupils were capable of achieving higher standards. Pupils interpreted graphs and charts very well. They were able to gather information for a purpose and collate this information to produce graphs. Pupils at P7 used ICT effectively to produce a variety of graphs including pie charts. At P1 and P2, pupils were making a good start to their early number work. Throughout the school, pupils’ skills in mental calculations were developing well and they carried out calculations with speed and accuracy. Pupils had a good understanding of almost all aspects of number, money and measurement. At P4 to P7, their understanding of fractions and decimals was not so well developed. In all classes, pupils had a good knowledge of shape, position and movement. Pupils were logical when solving problems, but some lacked confidence in identifying the appropriate strategies to use.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The quality of pastoral care was very good. The headteacher gave very good attention to the care and welfare of staff and pupils. Staff knew what they needed to do when

dealing with child protection issues. They worked very effectively together to promote positive behaviour and a very caring ethos. Pupils felt secure and happy in the school. Pupils knew what to do if they had concerns over issues such as bullying or their own personal safety. Effective arrangements were in place for P7 pupils transferring to secondary school.

The school's approaches for meeting pupils' individual needs were good overall. Class teachers provided suitable tasks for pupils with differing abilities. However, there was a need to increase the level of pace and challenge for higher attaining pupils. Learning assistants gave good support to pupils but, at times, they needed clearer guidance from teachers. Pupils experiencing difficulties with classwork did not always have their learning needs clearly identified. As a result, learning targets and tasks contained in individualised educational programmes were not always well matched to the specific needs of pupils.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The accommodation was good and well maintained. Classrooms were bright and spacious and provided a stimulating environment for learning. Staff made very good use of all available space. Pupils' work was attractively displayed throughout the school. Pupils had access to a supervised playground and some playground equipment which was well organised by older pupils. Good use was made of the local park for sports. Security arrangements were appropriate. Toilet facilities for staff were in need of upgrading. The uneven surface of the ramps leading to the main building and gymnasium was a potential danger to pupils.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Staff, pupils and parents were very proud of their school. The headteacher and staff had created a very welcoming and caring environment for pupils, parents and visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Pupils had positive attitudes to school, were considerate and polite and almost all were well behaved. The success of pupils was well celebrated on display boards throughout the school. Teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They needed to ensure that their expectations of pupils' attainment were consistently high. Pupils were valued equally and treated fairly. Staff encouraged pupils to be aware of other faiths and cultures through the religious and moral education programme. However, the school should continue to take steps to help pupils recognise and address equality and fairness issues. Regular assemblies

	provided opportunities for religious observance.
Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The headteacher and staff had developed very good partnerships with parents and the local community. The School Board and PTA supported the school very well. The school provided parents with helpful written reports on pupils' progress. Parents were also kept well informed about the curriculum through receiving curriculum plans and through useful information evenings. The school had very positive links with other schools in the Vale of Leven Academy Cluster of schools. A number of new initiatives such as a common approach to health education had been developed. The headteacher had consulted with parents over sensitive health issues, for example through a successful information evening on drug education. Very good arrangements were in place for pre-school children starting P1. This included P6 pupils contacting them to welcome them to the school. Links with local industry and the local community were productive.

7. Improving the school

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

Christie Park Primary School provided a caring and supportive environment in which pupils felt happy and motivated to learn. Pupils had access to a wide range of activities which promoted their personal and social development. The very good range of extra-curricular activities supported pupils' all round development. The school had made very good provision for health education. The overall good quality of learning and teaching had enabled the school to raise pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics. There was scope to further improve pupils' attainment by providing greater challenge and increased pace in learning. Pupils requiring additional support should have their needs clearly identified and their progress monitored more closely.

The senior management team provided very good leadership to the school. The headteacher was very well respected by staff, pupils and parents. She had made good progress in identifying, and taking forward, various initiatives which required attention. She was well supported by the depute headteacher and principal teacher who carried out their remits effectively and were committed to the school. They consulted all staff on the school's priorities and encouraged staff involvement in curriculum development tasks. A number of strategies to monitor the work of the school had been put in place. Staff provided evaluations on forward plans which were discussed with the headteacher and depute headteacher. Pupils' work was regularly sampled and monitored. The principal teacher had started a series of classroom observations to monitor writing.

However, monitoring the work of the school required more formality and rigour to further improve pupils' attainment. The strong teamwork of senior managers and staff provided the school with a firm base on which to move forward.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve aspects of learning and teaching and attainment. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve approaches to self-evaluation to ensure a clearer focus on raising pupils' attainment;
- make more effective use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils' needs are being met and that pupils experience a suitable pace of learning; and
- ensure that pupils who require additional support for learning have suitable learning targets and that their progress is monitored more closely.

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.

Alan Urquhart
HM Inspector

7 June 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Structure of the curriculum
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership

We judged the following to be good

- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Accommodation and facilities
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- 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.

<p>What pleased parents and carers most</p>	<p>What parents and carers would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoyed being at school and found their work stimulating and challenging. • The school had a good reputation in the local community. • Staff made them feel welcome. • Staff showed care and consideration for the care and welfare of all pupils. • Almost all parents felt that the school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few wanted more information about the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils. • A few felt the school did not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour.
<p>What pleased pupils most</p>	<p>What pupils would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed having a say in deciding how to make their school better. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could. • Almost all enjoyed being at school and felt that the school helped them keep safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff dealing more effectively with incidents involving bullying. • The behaviour of some pupils. • A few wanted more and a few others wanted less homework.
<p>What pleased staff most</p>	<p>What staff would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school was well led. • Pupils' success was regularly celebrated. • Staff showed care and concern for the welfare of pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few support staff would like to be more involved in the decision making process.

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 Cultural Services, 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, Unit 7 Ground Floor, Blair Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank, G81 2LA or by telephoning 0141 435 3550. 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 600265 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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