

**Clippens School
Linwood
Renfrewshire Council
13 June 2006**

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1. Background

Clippens School was inspected in February 2006 as part of a national sample of provision for pupils with additional support needs. 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 pupils' attainment in communication and language, understanding and relating to the environment and personal and social education.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed school staff and representatives from a wide range of partner agencies. Members of the inspection team also met the acting chairperson of the School Board, a group of parents¹, and members of the local community.

The school serves Renfrewshire and provides education for pupils from age 5 to 18 years who have additional support needs arising from complex learning difficulties, sensory impairments and physical disabilities. The Lismore unit is an integral part of the school. It provided support for pupils across the authority with an autistic spectrum disorder. At the time of the inspection the roll was 58. Almost all pupils had a Record of Needs. Due to the nature of pupils' complex needs, all were provided with free school meals. Taking account of their physical and medical conditions, pupils' overall attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The quality of the leadership maintaining the school at the cutting edge of development.
- The partnership with parents, and other agencies to meet the needs of pupils and to extend opportunities for inclusion and participation in the wider community.
- The school ethos and the strong culture of achievement which ensured that pupils were successful learners.
- The creative teaching approaches and the inclusion of pupils in joint learning activities with local schools and nurseries.

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

- Teamwork across the school which put pupils at the centre of all planning and development.
- The impact of approaches to self-evaluation on pupils' achievements.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents were very positive about all aspects of the school. They felt that staff were welcoming and provided very clear and detailed information about their child's progress. They thought that the school was very well led and had a very good reputation in the community. Parents felt that staff showed concern for the care and well-being of their child and found parents' workshops and family events helpful and informative. Due to the nature of the pupils additional support needs, they were not able to express their views to members of the inspection team. Nonetheless, they strongly conveyed the feeling that they enjoyed coming to school and were relaxed in the company of staff. Pupils showed pleasure when taking an active part in classroom and recreational activities. Teachers, instructors and support staff were also very positive about all aspects of the school. They enjoyed working in the school and felt that all staff worked together well as a team and were committed to the school and the pupils. They thought that the school set high standards and was well led, and that senior managers operated effectively as a team. A few wanted more opportunities to meet as class teams.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The quality of the curriculum was very good. The school had identified the very best practice across the UK and used this to develop a framework for the curriculum which very effectively met the needs of all pupils. Particular needs of individual pupils were met by providing motivating multi-sensory experiences and aromatherapy. Written guidance on courses was very clear and along with the support of curriculum co-ordinators ensured that teachers provided appropriate breadth, balance and progression in pupils' learning. Excellent links with local schools, nurseries and colleges of further education provided pupils with broad curricular experiences such as technology. At all stages staff used information and communications technology (ICT) such as interactive screens and switches to motivate pupils and enhance learning. The school's imaginative approaches to physical education (PE), enterprise and citizenship enhanced pupils learning experiences and made learning fun. A strong feature of the school was the programme of personal and social development embedded in all aspects of the curriculum. Class teams, including those in the Lismore unit, planned teaching and learning programmes effectively. The quality of teaching across the school was

excellent. Teachers, instructors and support staff actively engaged with all individuals within their class groups. The school regularly involved parents in supporting pupils' learning targets at home through parental workshops and in one-to-one meetings. Staff gave clear instructions and explanations of tasks using a wide range of alternative forms of communication such as gesture, pictures, symbols, and communication books. They had clear and detailed teaching plans with targets for groups and individuals which were regularly reviewed. They were highly skilled in using a variety of approaches to encourage pupils to be effective contributors. For example, they gave pupils sufficient time to think and respond before moving on. The school had developed a wide range of creative and innovative curricular approaches. For example, through the establishment of graded walks and the effective use of local community resources within PE.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was excellent. Pupils were engaged in the highest quality learning experiences within the school and through partnerships with the local and extended community. At all stages pupils were encouraged to work independently, to express preferences and make choices in relation to their learning. Pupils were happy in school and keen to learn. Their learning experiences had been developed, in close partnership with parents, to take account of pupils' individual abilities and interests. Pupils' skills in movement and the expressive arts were enriched and enhanced through a number of creative curricular approaches. Their skills were significantly extended through the effective contributions of specialists in early sensory learning, music and physical education. They expressed ideas and feelings through music and were making good progress in repeating rhythmic patterns. Pupils were able to perform a number of moves in routines within active PE sessions including swimming and hydrotherapy.

The school promoted pupils' wider achievements and interests very successfully through for example the use of National Qualifications (NQs). Pupils' achievements were celebrated in the monthly assemblies, parental bulletins and through the achievement board. The number of pupils receiving external awards had steadily increased. Pupils had successfully participated in a number of enterprise activities including the Pudsey Bear event and Christmas enterprise. At all stages, pupils were involved in recognising the needs of others through raising money for a number of charities. The school had gained an Eco School bronze award through involvement in a range of recycling initiatives as well as caring for the Linwood Community garden. Some senior pupils developed their independence through attending college and engaging in work experience in the community.

Communication and language

The overall quality of achievement in communication and language was excellent. At all stages, across the school, including the Lismore unit, pupils were making very good progress in their course work and within their individualised educational programmes (IEPs). Pupils benefited from a very wide range of language experiences through the comprehensive and highly creative support from the instructor with responsibility for language and from the speech and language therapists. At all stages, pupils used their preferred alternative forms of communication such as eye-pointing, switches and symbols effectively to make choices and interact with others. Parents were well supported in the use of alternative communication by the speech and language therapists and home link worker. A few pupils showed very good skills in basic

reading and early writing skills. They used the computer effectively to improve their ability to match words and pictures and develop their hand-eye coordination. Others used their communication books very confidently to conduct relevant and meaningful conversations. Senior pupils were highly motivated by practical and sensory activities which accompanied their listening to well-chosen texts. Careful postural support had improved pupils' abilities to follow conversations during group activities. At all stages access to a very wide range of stimulating, well-organised resources improved pupils' understanding of poetry, sensory stories and tapes. All pupils responded well to the high expectations of staff.

Understanding and relating to the environment

The quality of pupils' achievements in understanding and relating to the environment (URE) including mathematical thinking was very good. Across the school and in the Lismore unit, pupils were making good progress in achieving their individual targets and some were making very good progress in tackling challenging planned activities. Most pupils were doing very well in matching, and sequencing shapes and numbers. A few pupils were developing a good sense of time and were competent in reading time from clocks. At all stages, pupils explored the natural environment through an extensive range of sensory experiences for example through the 'feed the birds' initiative. In science, pupils were developing their awareness of cause and effect when investigating different materials. Pupils had gained some understanding of living things through enterprise activity involving the planting and growing of bulbs. Senior pupils were developing some appropriate skills in carrying out scientific investigations and a number of them had successfully achieved related NQ units at Access levels. Most pupils were able to use computers in their learning, with a significant majority using them independently. Senior pupils demonstrated skills in preparing food using electrical equipment. Within URE, senior pupils had been very successful in achieving a range of access and supported access courses, for example, in using a computer, handling money and recognising time.

Personal and social education

Overall, the quality of personal and social development (PSD) was excellent. Pupils were developing their personal and social skills to a very high level in everyday situations. Almost all pupils were making very good progress towards appropriate targets in PSD. They demonstrated a very sound understanding of daily routines and were developing confidence, independence and self-esteem. A few at both primary and secondary stages displayed well-developed social skills. For example, at the middle primary stages pupils participated very well in play activities planned to help them develop friendships with pupils from local primary schools. At all stages across the school and in the Lismore unit, pupils were acquiring essential skills in forming relationships and caring for others, appropriate social behaviour and skills in looking after themselves. They learned important personal care and presentation skills, including washing and cleaning their teeth. Almost all pupils related well to one another, to staff and to visitors. Primary and secondary pupils had excellent opportunities to work collaboratively with mainstream peers in confidence building and sharing activities through the curriculum. This included a very good programme to enhance physical skills and well being. The very strong links with mainstream schools enabled pupils in the Lismore unit to share activities and learn from each other.

Through the wide range of educational excursions, almost all pupils were benefiting from very positive links with the wider community. Almost all senior pupils had been successful in achieving a wide range of NQs at Access level 1 including Personal Care , Personal Hygiene, Basic Communication in a Familiar Setting and Healthy Basic Cooking.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The quality of pastoral care was very good with some excellent features. The school had very effective procedures in place to support pupils and keep them safe. Staff across the school knew their pupils very well, and were sensitive to the social, emotional, physical and health needs of individual pupils. Support staff managed personal intimate care effectively and respected pupils’ rights to dignity and privacy. Child protection procedures were very effective and fully embedded across the school. For example, all staff received regular child protection training as part of their induction. The school nurse, in partnership with the class teams, provided very good support for pupils with significant health needs and their families. She ensured that these needs, including the administration of medication, were well managed. All staff were aware of the need for health promotion, and worked in partnership with others including the dental hygienist to encourage healthy eating. The school did not have a formal anti-bullying policy.

Pupils’ needs were very well met. Activities across the school were well chosen to meet pupils’ individual requirements. Almost all pupils were achieving targets set for them within IEPs and staff carefully monitored and evaluated their progress towards achieving these targets. Parents were fully involved in setting targets, along with staff, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and visiting teachers for pupils with visual and hearing impairments. Parents played a strong role in ensuring that the needs of their children were met effectively. Support staff made a very significant contribution to pupils well being through very well-judged support in class, assisting pupils at meal times and providing organised support for play activities during break times. Pupils were effectively supported through close links with a range of partner agencies including educational psychologists, therapists, and the mainstream links co-ordinator. Staff managed arrangements for prospective pupils and school leavers very well.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	Overall, the school had very good accommodation with appropriate disabled access. Classrooms were bright, spacious and very well resourced. Extensive fund-raising had enabled the development of a wide range of facilities including a sensory room, a music room, a soft play room, and a therapy room. New developments included the parents’ room, a hydrotherapy pool and an ICT suite. Cleaning and janitorial staff maintained the school well on a day-to-day basis.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	Security arrangements and signing-in procedures for visitors were well organised. The external building required some maintenance. Staff had worked hard to create a stimulating outdoor learning environment for example, through the sensory garden and the wide range of accessible outdoor play equipment.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Staff, parents and pupils were very proud of the school. Staff morale was exceptionally high and the atmosphere throughout the school was excellent. The janitor and reception staff provided a very friendly welcome to parents and visitors. All staff shared a sense of ownership of the schools aims. The high quality relationships between staff and pupils and the teamwork amongst staff were outstanding. Staff were very skilled in dealing with challenging behaviour. They had very high expectations of pupils' achievements in all classes and many pupils had made very significant progress since their arrival in the school. The school provided appropriate and regular opportunities for religious observance and learning about other beliefs and customs through assemblies and religious and moral education classes. The school worked hard to ensure that pupils were given opportunities for achievement comparable to those in mainstream schools. They were included in a wide range of community events and had the opportunity to access appropriate out-of-school activities.
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnerships with the School Board, parents and the extended community were excellent. Parents were invited to annual meetings to review their children's progress and to discuss next steps in learning. They found staff very approachable and helpful. The school provided a wide range of support systems to help families. These included sleep counsellors and the home link worker. Staff kept parents well informed about what their children were doing in school through informative monthly bulletins, booklets, home school diaries and family fun nights. Parents particularly appreciated the high quality individualised annual reports on their child's progress. The school's website was attractive and informative and included the school's aims. The headteacher regularly consulted parents on a range of issues including sensitive health issues. The school had developed excellent links with a range of local schools and colleges.

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The two local chaplains regularly visited the school and contributed to assemblies. The school had developed a range of links with the community including enterprise activities such as delivering free local newspapers, and tending the community garden.

7. Improving the school

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

Clippens School, including the Lismore unit, provided an excellent educational experience for its pupils within an inclusive learning environment. The school provided consistently high quality teaching and support for pupils. Pupils were making very good progress in their learning within a stimulating and challenging curriculum. They experienced a range of innovative and creative learning experiences and were encouraged to be active participants in the learning process. Staff had very high expectations of pupils.

The quality of leadership of the school was excellent. The headteacher was an inspirational leader, highly respected by parents, pupils and staff and the wider community. She used her wide knowledge of education to develop the highest quality learning experiences for pupils in Clippens School including the Lismore unit. She was highly supportive of staff and provided a full and comprehensive range of professional development opportunities to motivate and empower her staff. She also continued to challenge staff to further improve the learning and teaching experiences available to pupils.

The senior management structure was relatively new and was not yet fully embedded across all aspects of the school. The two deputy headteachers effectively monitored teaching plans and target setting within IEPs. They provided valuable support to the headteacher. They evaluated pupils' learning experiences and provided high quality advice to staff which had led to improvements in pupils' achievements. The principal teachers provided well-judged support for learning and teaching. They had been very effective in improving the range of inclusive opportunities available to pupils and the knowledge and understanding of staff in relation to the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The senior management team rigorously monitored the impact of self-evaluation strategies on pupils' learning. They consulted with parents, pupils and staff on a wide range of school issues. School staff met on a regular basis to share good practice and reflect on all aspects of their teaching and support. The outcomes of a recent comprehensive review of the school had led to planned action to further improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Staff groups had been established to monitor and develop aspects of the curriculum including the development of high quality approaches to support behavioural management. The school's approaches to reviewing and improving its performance were highly developed at all levels. The overall quality of self-evaluation was excellent.

Main point 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:

- fully extend the length of the school day for secondary age pupils in line with national guidance.

What happens next?

As a result of the very high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Anna Boni
HM Inspector

13 June 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	Very good
The teaching process	Excellent
Pupils' learning experiences	Excellent
Pupils' attainment in English language	Excellent
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	Very good
Personal and social development	Excellent

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

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

Improving the school	
Leadership	Excellent
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	Very good
Self-evaluation	Excellent

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 thought the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoyed being in school. • Staff made them feel very welcome in the school. • School reports provided them with very helpful information about their children's progress. • The school had a very good reputation in the community and was very well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents were very pleased with all aspects of the school.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the complexity of their additional support needs, the pupils did not complete questionnaires. Observations of the pupils, during lessons and at other times, indicated that they enjoyed being at school and had very good relationships with staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils appeared to be very positive about all aspects of the school
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed working in the school. • They celebrated pupils' success regularly and showed care and concern for the welfare of the pupils. • They worked hard to promote good relations with the community. • The school was very well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were very positive about all aspects of the school

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, 1st Floor, Europa House, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow, G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website 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 the above address.

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.

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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