

**Cumbernauld Primary School
North Lanarkshire Council
5 April 2005**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils supported?	3
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?	11

1. Background

Cumbernauld Primary School was inspected in January 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 and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairpersons of the School Board and parent teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents.

The school is non-denominational. It serves the village of Cumbernauld and areas in the north of the new town. The school shares a campus and many facilities with St Andrew's Primary School. At the time of the inspection the roll was 613 which included 80 pupils attending through placing requests. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' hard work, courtesy and very good behaviour.
- The quality of pastoral care provided by teachers and support staff, and the sense of equality and fairness which they promoted.
- Very positive relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils, which encouraged pupils to work hard and strive for high attainment.
- The overall quality of the accommodation and the facilities it provided for learning and teaching.
- The school's highly productive and close relationship with its partner school on the shared campus, achieved through strong leadership.

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

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents who were interviewed and responded to the questionnaire were happy with almost all aspects of the work of the school. They thought children enjoyed being at school, were treated fairly and found work stimulating and challenging. They believed that the school was well led. Some wanted a clearer idea about the school's priorities for improving their children's education. A substantial number expressed concerns about the congestion caused by parents' cars as pupils arrived and departed. Teachers and support staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school, including the quality of leadership. All believed that staff showed care and concern for pupils, that teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment and that pupils were enthusiastic about learning. Pupils were very happy with the school and believed it helped them to keep safe and healthy. They thought that teachers explained things clearly, and that pupils had a say in how to make the school better.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum provided pupils with a broad and balanced experience including French or German for pupils at P6 and P7. It made valuable contributions to pupils' learning in key aspects of health, citizenship and enterprise. Additional time was allocated to English language and mathematics to improve pupils' experience and attainment. Teachers used a broad range of approaches, with many good examples of whole-class teaching and work in smaller groups. Staff praised pupils appropriately to encourage them and to reward them for tasks done well. Teachers used homework very effectively to support pupils' learning. Staff did not make enough use of information and communications technology (ICT) in learning and teaching. Most made effective use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and plan next steps in their learning.

Pupils were very well-behaved and applied themselves well to their tasks. Most responded well to teaching. Pupils showed independence and maturity when given the opportunity to work in groups. They were learning the skills and roles needed to make effective contributions to teamwork. They cooperated well with classmates, support staff and teachers but a few pupils needed to be more actively involved.

Pupils were developing appropriate values and attitudes through programmes in religious and moral education (RME) and personal and social development (PSD), and through successful fundraising for charity. They learned important aspects of responsible citizenship from the school's links with the local community, including the close working partnership with St Andrew's Primary School. They undertook duties such as acting as prefects and "bully busters" and some participated in the very effective pupil council. Two pupils had been appointed Junior Road Safety Officers. Pupils in P6 and P7 could take part in residential experiences for outdoor activities, and rose well to the challenges of these activities. Many pupils developed skills and performed well in extra-curricular activities. They participated in competitions, some jointly with the neighbouring St Andrew's Primary School, and many had won awards locally and nationally in poetry, music, swimming and athletics. A group of pupils in P7 had reached the final stages of the national "Be an Inventor" competition, and others had won an award for their contribution to raising awareness of renewable energy.

Many pupils had performed well in initiatives relating to environmental awareness, health promotion and enterprise in education.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. The school had maintained good overall standards in pupils' attainment for a number of years. Pupils were making very good progress in their coursework at P1-P2 and P5-P7. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. Many pupils were attaining these levels early. Pupils in most classes listened attentively in class and could clearly recall information from previous lessons. At P1, pupils were successfully using their detailed picture plans to develop their writing. At P4 to P7, most pupils enjoyed reading for pleasure. They participated enthusiastically in an initiative to promote reading more widely across the school. At P6 and P7, the quality of pupils' creative and functional writing was good and they presented it carefully and neatly. By P7, pupils talked very confidently about a range of books and authors and offered mature opinions about current issues. Pupils with English as an additional language were making good progress in developing their language skills.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Over the last four years, levels of attainment had fluctuated but there were indications of improvement. Almost all pupils at P1 to P3 and most at P4 to P7 had attained appropriate national attainment levels in mathematics. A few had exceeded these levels. Most pupils were making good progress in their coursework, but a few needed more challenging tasks. At all stages, most pupils performed mental calculations accurately. Pupils in P1 worked well together in small groups to record sets of ten. At P3 to P7, most pupils had good skills in written calculations. Pupils in P7 organised and interpreted information from a variety of graphs accurately. They made good use of spreadsheets to represent data collected for personal projects. At all stages, most pupils used a range of approaches effectively to solve problems, working confidently in small groups.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Staff were caring, committed to pupils' welfare and sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs. Staff were well supported by a range of policies, including one for child protection, which were effective in ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. Pupils felt safe in the school and had confidence in its procedures for dealing with bullying. They felt able to discuss confidential matters with the headteacher, teachers and support staff.

Overall, pupils' needs were well met. The school provided good support for pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning. Area learning support staff, teachers, promoted staff and support staff all made valuable contributions, working with groups and individuals. A number of pupils benefited from support for English as an additional language, through helpful programmes provided by a visiting teacher. The school had made time available for the range of staff who worked with individual

pupils to consult and plan programmes. The school formed teaching groups for English and mathematics from P3 to P7 on the basis of the pupils' prior attainments. These arrangements helped to ensure that pupils worked at an appropriate level and pace. Teachers used some effective approaches to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils. There remained scope to provide greater challenge and pace for these pupils. Working with the education authority, the school needed to improve some aspects of its management of Records of Needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of the accommodation was very good. The new school, which had opened in January 2003, shared a campus and many facilities with St Andrew's Primary School. It had won awards for its environmentally sensitive design and energy efficiency. Teaching areas were bright, attractive and well suited to the needs of learning and teaching. Extra teaching spaces included rooms for noisy or quiet activities, a library and a base for learning support activities. The hall was used both for physical education and school meals which, despite skilful timetabling, created some difficulties with access. Two huts, currently used to accommodate classes and activities, were due to be replaced by an extension in the summer of 2005. The large number of parents' cars, used by parents to bring pupils to school and collect them, caused severe traffic congestion. The school needed to continue to work with the community and relevant agencies, to encourage parents to help ensure pupils' safety by limiting the number of cars in the vicinity.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Pupils and staff related very well together and showed mutual respect. The school provided an environment which encouraged positive attitudes to learning and promoted high standards of behaviour, achievement and attainment. Teachers had generally high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort, and pupils responded well to these expectations. Teachers used praise well to encourage and reward pupils. The programmes in PSD and RME were effective in encouraging pupils to respect differences and celebrate diversity. Pupils were treated sensitively and fairly. The school provided regular opportunities for religious observance, including end-of-term services held jointly with St Andrew's Primary School.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school worked in close and productive partnership with parents, St Andrew's Primary School, other local schools and colleges, the wider community including businesses, and the Church. The School Board and PTA provided valued support. Parents were appropriately involved in aspects of the work of the school but some wished for clearer advice on how they could support their children's education. Staff communicated effectively with parents in a variety of ways including informative newsletters, weekly class programme newsheets, two reports each year on pupils' progress, and workshops on various aspects of the curriculum. Parents were carefully consulted over sensitive topics, for example, in health education. Attendance at parents' evenings and school and community activities was high.

7. Improving the school

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

The school provided pupils with a broad curriculum and effective teaching. Staff were committed to pupils' welfare, and to promoting high standards. They provided pupils with a supportive environment to encourage them to become successful learners and confident individuals. Pupils' attainments in English language, mathematics and across other areas of the curriculum were good. Many pupils had broader achievements, including notable successes in important aspects of health, citizenship and enterprise.

The headteacher provided strong leadership which had been particularly effective in establishing the new school and building a commendable partnership with St Andrew's Primary School. Staff had confidence in her leadership and its potential to improve the

school's performance. She was respected by parents, carers and the wider educational community. She had introduced a wide range of improvements to the curriculum, and in learning and teaching. She led a strong team of two deputy headteachers and one principal teacher. Each had important remits, including responsibilities for stages and curriculum areas, which they fulfilled well. However, too much of the deputy headteachers' time was used for teaching groups, leaving too little opportunity for them to take on more strategic roles including aspects of quality assurance. The principal teacher had a positive impact on her areas of responsibility and provided a very good role model through her class teaching commitment.

The school used some effective approaches to ensure continuing improvement. Staff reviewed the quality of their work, for example by using national quality indicators. They needed to use these more rigorously. The headteacher monitored the school's performance well overall, using a range of evidence such as samples of pupils' work and information about pupils' attainment. She kept a good overview of learning and teaching through her frequent presence in the open plan teaching areas. These approaches needed to be developed more fully by regular observation of classwork, by providing teachers with detailed feedback, and by identifying those aspects of learning and teaching which needed to be improved. Teachers were appropriately involved in consultation on the school's development priorities.

Main points for action

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

- continue to improve aspects of learning and teaching, including more effective use of ICT;
- develop further the school's approaches to meeting the needs of higher attaining pupils;
- involve teachers more fully in self-evaluation; and
- improve the effectiveness of the school's quality assurance procedures, including a clearer focus for promoted staff, to lead to improvements in learning, teaching and pupils' attainment.

The school and education authority should also continue to work with appropriate agencies, parents and the community, to encourage parents to help ensure pupils' safety by limiting the number of cars in the vicinity of the school.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Bill Geddes
HM Inspector

5 April 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Pastoral care
- Accommodation and facilities
- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- 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.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoyed being at school, were treated fairly and found work stimulating and challenging. • The school was well led. • Staff made them feel welcome in the school and showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a quarter of parents thought the school could supply better information about children's progress and the standards of work it expected, and could consult parents more effectively on decisions which affected their children. • Around a third did not have a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving the children's education. • Many parents expressed concerns about the congestion caused by cars as pupils arrived and departed.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all thought that the school helped them to keep safe and healthy, and indicated that they enjoyed being at school and got on well with other pupils. • Almost all teachers explained things clearly, helped them when they were having difficulties in their work, told them when they had done something well and expected them to work hard. • They had a say in improving the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils did not raise any specific issues.

What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and support staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school, including the quality of leadership. • All teachers and support staff believed that staff showed care and concern for the care and welfare of pupils, teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment, and pupils were enthusiastic about learning. • All teachers believed that their time for continuous professional development was used effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than half support staff thought that their time for continuous professional development was used effectively. • A few teachers believed there was scope for improvement in communication between senior managers and staff, and for teachers to be better involved in decision making. • A few support staff thought there was room for improvement in involving them in decision making and in discussing school priorities.

How can you contact us?

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Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI, at the above address.

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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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