

**Dalreoch Primary School
Dumbarton
West Dunbartonshire Council
8 May 2007**

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1. Background

Dalreoch Primary School was inspected in February 2007 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 innovation, and its 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 Friends of Dalreoch School, and a group of parents¹.

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

The school serves the Dalreoch area of Dumbarton. At the time of the inspection the roll was 114. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Friendly and confident pupils.
- Attainment at the early stages in English language.
- Productive relationships between staff and parents, and with the local community.

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.

Parents praised the commitment of the staff. They said their children enjoyed school and found their work stimulating. Parents were pleased with the range of community links. A small number of parents wanted more information about their children's learning, and about the school's improvement plans. A minority of parents had concerns about arrangements for the formation of multi-stage classes. Almost half expressed concerns about aspects of

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 school's accommodation. Pupils were very positive about their school. They enjoyed school and reported that staff helped them, explained things clearly and expected them to work hard. Staff were pleased with pupils' enthusiasm for learning. However, almost all did not feel the school was well led nor that there was effective communication between senior managers and staff. Several teaching and support staff felt that morale among staff was not high.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall quality of the curriculum was adequate. Teachers provided a broad curriculum which was enhanced by contributions from visiting teachers and sports coaches. Pupils' health and fitness had been improved through increased access to physical education. At the early stages, pupils benefited from appropriate opportunities to learn through play. Across the stages, pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) and enterprise were not well developed. Staff had not yet monitored the impact on pupils' learning of additional time allocated to areas of the curriculum. The overall quality of teaching was adequate. Teachers planned their lessons conscientiously and ensured that pupils understood the tasks set. A few teachers reviewed learning well at the end of lessons. Very effective team teaching at the early stages ensured that pupils benefited from individual attention to enhance their learning. Teachers at the early stages ensured that pupils understood their learning targets and helped them to improve their work. However, this good practice was not consistent throughout the rest of the school. Teachers did not make effective use of assessment information to help extend pupils' understanding and provide pupils with further challenge. Regular homework tasks were well supported by parents.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was adequate. Pupils were enthusiastic, keen to learn and enjoyed their schoolwork. At all stages, pupils' learning was enhanced by a range of relevant and interesting visits and visiting speakers. Pupils in P6/P7 responded thoughtfully in a well-managed question-and-answer session with a local political candidate. In P1 to P4, pupils' learning was enhanced through opportunities to reflect on their own ideas and experiences. Overall, there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn from each other in effective group work, or through independent learning. The pace of learning did not always offer sufficient challenge for a few pupils in each class. Across the curriculum, pupils did not yet have a clear enough understanding of what they needed to do to make further progress in their work.

The school had taken some positive and effective steps to develop pupils' wider achievements and had developed effectively pupils' confidence and self esteem. Older pupils acted responsibly as monitors, mediators and buddies. Pupils felt that they had good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through the work of the pupil council. They had developed a keen awareness of the needs of others, including those of other cultures. They regularly raised money for charity and supported a community in India. Innovative projects on asylum seekers and anti-sectarianism had given pupils a sound understanding of the perspective of other members of their community. Pupils in P6/P7 had learned about their role as citizens in a democratic society through their study of the Scottish Parliament. The importance of health and fitness was emphasised through several

extra-curricular sports activities and a popular healthy cookery club. Pupils at all stages performed confidently in front of others when participating in regular school plays. The school choir had recently performed at a high profile event at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading, writing, talking and listening. At the early stages, a majority were attaining these levels in reading and writing earlier than might normally be expected. Although most pupils were making appropriate progress in their classwork, some pupils were capable of achieving higher standards. At all stages, pupils listened well to instructions and spoke confidently with their teachers and other adults. A few pupils in P6/P7 demonstrated mature listening and talking skills when discussing democratic processes with a local politician. Most pupils read fluently and with good expression. Those at P6 talked confidently about features of the books they had read. Pupils wrote regularly for a range of purposes. At the early stages, pupils wrote detailed book reviews and imaginative stories.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. The majority of pupils were attaining appropriate national levels of attainment. At the early stages, a majority of pupils were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Levels of attainment at the middle and upper stages had fallen recently. Pupils were making steady progress in their coursework. By P7, pupils could interpret information accurately from a range of graphs and charts. Across the school, pupils were not skilled in the use of ICT to create spreadsheets and databases. At all stages, most pupils demonstrated accuracy in written and mental calculations. Pupils at P7 lacked confidence in using fractions and in calculating durations of time. At the early stages, pupils could use practical equipment well to measure volume. At all stages, pupils could identify and discuss with confidence the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. However, they were unsure of strategies they could use to solve problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Overall, approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs were weak. Teachers set tasks which were matched to the needs of most pupils. Not all teachers were skilled in ensuring that the range of pupils' needs, including those of higher and lower attaining pupils, were being met appropriately. Staff had identified some of the pupils who needed additional support with their learning. Several pupils required further assessment and more appropriate support. The support for learning teacher was not deployed effectively. She had produced well structured individualised educational programmes for a small number of pupils. However, she was not able to work closely enough with teachers to support them in meeting pupils' needs. Staff had not had ready access to the recommendations from various agencies, including those from the authority's psychological services, to help them provide fully appropriate support for pupils. Greater clarity of learning assistants' remits would further enhance the good impact of their work.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Overall, the school's arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils had strengths which just outweighed weaknesses. Pupils were looked after well at break times by learning assistants and senior pupils. They were confident that staff would help them if they had any concerns. Staff implemented effectively the school's approaches to ensuring child protection. They understood and applied the school's policies on anti-racism and anti-bullying. Pupils were developing healthy and safe lifestyles through the school's health education programme. They enjoyed the good quality school lunches, and catering staff encouraged them to make healthy choices. Effective arrangements ensured pupils transferring from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Dumbarton Academy were well supported. Information about individual children, however, including assessments and support plans from partner agencies, was not organised well or shared effectively amongst staff. As a result staff lacked some of the information they required to ensure that they could support pupils' emotional, physical and social needs fully and effectively.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation and facilities was weak. Building security arrangements were appropriate. Classrooms were organised well to provide a range of learning environments. The reception area was enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work and achievements. The building was accessible to disabled users. Pupils' access to and their use of a wide range of outdoor play areas and equipment developed their co-operative skills. The use of the spacious building, however, had not been well planned to promote effective learning. Classrooms were isolated from one another and were set amongst resource rooms and bases occupied by other agencies. Staff did not make effective use of the wide range of facilities, including an extensive suite of computers. Toilets required to be upgraded. The storage of dining tables in the school hall posed a hazard during active sports. The school's fire log had not been maintained appropriately and pupils had insufficient opportunities to practise evacuation.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The climate in the school was positive overall. All pupils were well behaved, courteous and polite. The headteacher had been unsuccessful, however, in developing a positive climate amongst staff. Senior managers had not been sufficiently vigilant in relation to aspects affecting the morale of a small number of staff. Expectations of pupils' behaviour were good. Teachers' expectations of pupils' progress were not consistently high enough, particularly at the middle and upper stages. The school promoted effectively pupils' understanding of race equality and diversity. A very successful joint project with nearby St Michael's Primary School helped pupils to develop anti-sectarian views. Weekly assemblies provided appropriate opportunities for celebrating success and for religious observance. The school had been slow to ensure that there were equal and fair opportunities for all pupils within the curriculum.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community were good. Parents supported the school well. The Parent Teacher Association organised social and fundraising events and the School Board provided good support for the school. Staff provided helpful information on pupils' progress through interim reports, in addition to annual reports and parents' evenings. Regular newsletters and information leaflets were informative and helpful to parents. Staff had recently sought parents' views on homework and planned to involve them more effectively in supporting their children's learning. They consulted parents appropriately on sensitive health issues. The school nurse provided strong support in aspects of the health education programme. Parents had not yet been given sufficient information on the curriculum or consulted fully on the school's future priorities for development. Staff had been effective in developing positive relationships between pupils and the school's neighbours. The school had established some very valuable links with the community, including with other local schools, to support learning.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Overall, Dalreoch Primary School had a number of strengths which just outweighed weaknesses in provision. Parents were satisfied with most aspects of the school. Pupils felt safe and well looked after. Staff provided pupils with an adequate quality of learning and teaching overall. Most pupils at all stages were attaining appropriate national standards. However, morale amongst a small number of staff was low. The quality of education

provided for pupils required further improvement. This included the need to improve communication between senior managers and staff, and to provide sufficient guidance to staff to meet pupils' learning needs. The headteacher was very committed to the school, and had led some improvements in provision including effective approaches to teaching writing. She had maintained a positive climate among pupils and good relationships with parents and the local community. However, progress in key areas had been too slow. The headteacher had not communicated clearly to staff her vision for the school. Aspects of day-to-day communications with staff were not supporting effective teamwork. The recently appointed deputy headteacher had not yet had sufficient impact on her areas of responsibility.

The school's arrangements for monitoring the quality of learning and teaching, including approaches to tracking and predicting pupils' progress were at an early stage of development. The headteacher had introduced additional resources to ensure that pupils progressed in their learning. Staff were aware of the school's priorities for improvement, but they did not have a clear enough understanding of the features of very effective practice. As a result a number of important areas of the school's provision needed improvement. The school had not implemented sufficiently rigorous approaches to self-evaluation, resulting in insufficient support and challenge for staff and for pupils. The headteacher now required the active support of the education authority to develop the school's capacity for improvement and to ensure that identified weaknesses are addressed.

Main points for action

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- teaching approaches, including the use of assessment information to plan next steps in pupils' learning and track their progress;
- meeting the learning needs of pupils through more rigorous support and challenge;
- leadership of the school; and
- the effectiveness of the school's processes of self-evaluation, including procedures to monitor the quality of learning and teaching.

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.

Jacqueline Sinclair
HM Inspector

8 May 2007

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	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	weak

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	weak
Self-evaluation	weak

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

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
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"> • Looked after their children well and treated them fairly. • Provided stimulating and challenging learning activities. • Maintained a good reputation in the local community. • Gave them regular helpful information about their child's progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve aspects of the school's accommodation. • Provide more information on the school's priorities for improving education. • Explain how they can support their child with homework.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explained things clearly and expected them to work hard. • Listened to what they said and helped them if they were upset. • Dealt with bullying effectively. • Involved them in deciding how to make the school better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gave good attention to pupils' care and welfare and had effective procedures for child protection and the prevention of bullying. • Encouraged mutual respect between teachers and pupils, set high standards for pupils' behaviour. • Promoted and maintained good relations with the local community. • Set high standards for pupils' attainment and celebrated pupils' success regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication between senior managers and staff and the teamwork of senior managers. • Give support staff more opportunities to be involved in decision-making.

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, Ground Floor Suite, Unit 7, 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 our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 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 (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

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