

**Dunipace Primary School
Denny
Falkirk Council
16 January 2007**

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1. Background

Dunipace Primary School was inspected in October 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 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, vice chairperson of the School Board and representatives of the parent association (PA) 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 village of Dunipace and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 211, including 34 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with 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.

- Strong commitment of all staff and the sense of teamwork.
- The quality of pastoral care.
- Use of information and communications technology (ICT) in learning and teaching.
- Systematic and rigorous processes for monitoring the work of the school.
- The leadership and vision of the headteacher for the continued development of the school.

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

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, pupils and staff were very pleased with almost all aspects of the work of the school. Parents thought that staff provided a high level of care for pupils. Almost all parents were confident that the headteacher dealt effectively with concerns raised. They were particularly pleased with the level of communication between school and home and felt that staff worked hard to include them in their child's learning through homework. A few parents would like more information on their child's strengths and weaknesses in learning. Pupils were very proud of their school and felt that staff dealt well with bullying. They thought that the school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy. They believed that their teachers gave clear explanations and helped them with challenging work. A quarter of pupils said that the behaviour of a few pupils in school was not good and that pupils were not always treated fairly. Staff felt supported by the strong sense of teamwork. They felt fully involved in decision making and school development work. They valued the headteacher's commitment and the strong leadership she provided.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The structure of the school's curriculum was very good and provided pupils with a wide range of learning experiences. The school effectively used additional time to support pupils' learning in English language and mathematics. For example, focused writing groups provided good targeted support to pupils and this had impacted positively on pupils' attainment in writing. Staff had established effective cross curricular links. Enterprise education was well integrated across the curriculum. For example, a healthy tuckshop was set up as part of the P6 enterprise project and included training from a local business in health and hygiene and in sales and marketing. To mark European day of languages and to link with the school's healthy eating theme, pupils in P4 to P7 had created fruit and vegetable characters which they introduced in French to their peers. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used effectively, particularly the interactive white board to support learning and teaching across the curriculum. Pupils from P4 to P7 learned French but by P7 too many pupils had not made good progress. The quality of teaching was good. There were a few examples of very effective direct and interactive class teaching but this good practice needed to be more consistent across the school. Teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils and explained things clearly. Teachers wrote encouraging comments in jotters and used praise effectively to encourage learning and build confidence. Regular homework helped to support pupils' learning.

The quality of learning across the school was good. Pupils were motivated and worked well without close supervision. At all stages, pupils were developing skills in learning independently but they required more opportunities to develop skills further, especially more able pupils. Pupils worked well together in pairs and small groups. Pupils from P4 to P7 were confident in evaluating their own work and that of others. They were

involved in identifying areas of interest to explore in environmental studies by recording what they already knew and what they would like to find out. Pupils were not sufficiently involved in discussing next steps in their learning and did not have a clear understanding of what they needed to do to improve the quality of their work.

Pupils developed effective citizenship skills by taking responsibility for specific duties in class and around the school. These included acting as classroom helpers, playground buddies, assisting with dinner duties and serving on the pupil council and Eco committee. Pupils fulfilled these roles well and were proud of the help they gave to others. Pupils were given good opportunities to be active and to develop their personal interests through a range of after school clubs, including football, cross-country running, music, theatre, dance and cycling proficiency. The school had gained an ICT Gold Award from Falkirk Council. The annual residential experience for pupils in P7 provided a rich experience in which they could develop personal and social skills.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels and a significant number of pupils across the school had achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress towards appropriate learning targets. The school had maintained a good level of attainment for the past few years and had recently taken steps to raise attainment in writing. At all stages, most pupils listened and responded appropriately to questions. They had yet to develop good skills in talking and listening in groups. Pupils were developing good skills in searching for information from books and the Internet. By P7, pupils were able to talk about books they had read in class, but were not sufficiently skilled in discussing how writers had used language. Pupils' reading habits were not well developed, especially among boys, and few read widely for pleasure. Pupils wrote for a range of purposes and for different audiences. At P3 to P7 most pupils coped well with their classwork, but handwriting and presentation were not of a sufficiently high standard.

Mathematics

Attainment in mathematics was good. Over the last few years, levels of attainment had remained stable. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels. Almost half the pupils attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected but a few pupils had not sufficiently mastered the work at the level achieved. Most pupils were making steady progress with coursework. By P7, pupils were confident in handling data and had some experience in designing and carrying out their own surveys. Most pupils across the school displayed effective skills in mental and written calculations. At all stages, they had a sound grasp of basic number and of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Pupils at P4 were competent in their knowledge of multiplication and used ICT very effectively to practise their skills. Pupils at all stages showed a good understanding of two- and three-dimensional shape. A few pupils at the upper stages were not sufficiently secure in their understanding of measurement, fractions and decimals. At all stages, pupils were involved in problem-solving activities and were able to describe and report on strategies they might use.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school met the learning needs of its pupils well. Learning and teaching approaches were varied in some classes to maintain interest and motivate pupils, and most tasks set were appropriate. There was not always sufficient challenges for more able pupils. All pupils were involved in setting personal learning targets but these were not yet sufficiently focused upon their learning needs. The part-time learning support teachers gave very good support to pupils who were experiencing difficulties in their learning and their progress was carefully monitored. Individualised educational programmes were used to set appropriate learning targets which were shared with parents. Staff knew children well and were very sensitive to their needs. Support assistants made a very positive contribution to supporting individuals and groups of pupils throughout the school. Further consideration should now be given to the effective deployment of support staff to meet the needs of all pupils. The school worked very well in partnership with a range of external agencies to support pupils' specific needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The quality of pastoral care throughout the school was very good. Well-established policies and procedures for ensuring the care and welfare and protection of all pupils were implemented well. All staff had received appropriate training in child protection. Staff knew pupils well and were very committed to supporting their needs. Staff in the playground had been trained in positive behaviour strategies and used a reward system well to recognise and encourage outstanding behaviour. Procedures for pupils transferring to Denny High School were very good and pupils entering P1 were well supported. Most pupils demonstrated a good awareness of the need to eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The quality of accommodation was good. The school provided a pleasant and safe environment. The main hall provided good space for whole school assemblies, physical education and drama. The hall was also used as a dining area but there were problems with the school's arrangements for accommodating the number of pupils having lunch. The school should explore alternative approaches to the storage of equipment and materials to make the most of the limited space available. Shared open areas were not used well to support pupils' learning. Pupils' work was effectively displayed throughout the school. There was full disabled access to the building and a disabled toilet. Appropriate security measures were in place. The school was set in generous grounds which provided spacious play areas.
Aspect	Comment

<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>The school provided a warm and caring environment based on a strong sense of inclusion and equality. Pupils, parents and staff shared great pride in the school and all pupils wore school uniform. Relationships amongst staff were very positive and there was a very strong sense of teamwork. Most pupils responded well to the positive approach to behaviour management and pupils' behaviour was generally good. However, more consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour and quality of work, by a few staff, was required. Pupils participated in the wider life of the school and home achievements were celebrated. Ethnic, cultural and religious diversity was positively promoted through the curriculum and in the day-to-day life of the school. School assemblies provided good opportunities for recognising and sharing pupils' achievements and for religious observance. The school now needed to increase the frequency of assemblies.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and the community</p>	<p>The school had established strong and effective links with parents, the School Board and PTA. The standards and quality report, curriculum leaflets and regular newsletters were of a high quality and provided good information to parents on the work of the school. An ICT open afternoon and parents' training session had successfully raised parents' awareness of the use of ICT in their child's learning. Parents were consulted on sensitive aspects of the health education programme and were suitably involved in reviewing the work of the school. The written interim and end of year progress reports and <i>Personal Learning Plans</i> provided good information for parents. Parents were involved in their child's learning through regular and varied homework. There were strong links with other local schools and the local community. Pupils participated in a range of local events including carol singing for senior citizens, raising funds for the local hospice and working with the local Countryside Ranger.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Dunipace Primary School provided a very caring and supportive environment for learning. The staff were committed to the care and welfare of pupils. The quality of teaching and learning was good and there were a few examples of very effective teaching. A few teachers did not always set sufficiently high expectations of the quality of pupils' work and of pupils' behaviour. Setting and sharing targets for learning was at an early stage of development and pupils now needed to be involved in

a more meaningful way. The school successfully used homework to involve parents in their child's learning.

The headteacher provided very good leadership and was held in high regard by staff, parents and pupils. She had established a very strong collegiate approach to school development. She knew the pupils and their families well. She ably shared a clear strategic vision for the school which focused appropriately on raising pupils' attainment. The headteacher had good interpersonal skills which she successfully used to build staff and pupil morale. She engaged well with parents and had successfully gained their trust. She handled sensitive and difficult situations well. The deputy headteacher had joined the staff in January 2006 and was developing his role in the school. He had formed positive relationships with staff. The principal teacher gave very effective support to the headteacher. She ably monitored the work of the early years staff and her teaching was a model of good practice. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and principal teacher effectively monitored learning and teaching and provided helpful feedback to staff. All staff were involved in the decision-making process. They readily engaged in self-evaluation and had identified areas for further development. Appropriate plans were in place to achieve these. Almost all staff embraced the challenge of continuous improvement and teachers were confident in leading initiatives.

Main points for action

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

- continue to raise attainment in English language and mathematics including focusing on promoting reading particularly at the upper stages;
- ensure teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and work ethic are consistently high;
- develop a more meaningful approach to sharing learning targets with pupils; and
- make better use of accommodation to provide improved learning experiences, particularly at the early stages.

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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Belinda Sheehan
HM Inspector

16 January 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	very good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

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

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	very good

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"> • The care and welfare shown to pupils. • The school's reputation in the community. • Staff encourage pupils to give of their best. • Explained well how parents can help with homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give clearer information on the school's priorities for improving education. • Consult parents more on decisions which affect their child and provide more information about their child's strengths and weaknesses.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were effective in dealing with bullying. • Staff made them feel safe and well looked after. • Teachers expected them to work hard and helped them with work they did not understand. • Teachers checked their homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of some pupils. • Ensure that all pupils are treated fairly.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were very pleased with all aspects of the work of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

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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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