

**Glasgow Gaelic Primary School  
Glasgow City Council**

**11 May 2004**

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## **1. Background**

Glasgow Gaelic School was inspected in January 2004 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 and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in Gaelic language, English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and carers, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, and representatives of parental and community groups.

The school is situated in the centre of Glasgow. It had been established in 1999 and provides education through the medium of Gaelic for children in the nursery class and pupils from P1 to P7. For the majority, Gaelic is their second language. Pupils are placed in the school on request and come from across the city and neighbouring authorities. At the time of the inspection the roll was 185, including 26 in the nursery class. The nursery class was not inspected as part of this inspection. 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.

- A strong community identity and a very positive ethos.
- Highly motivated and enthusiastic learners.
- Effective teaching and use of the Gaelic language.
- Very good attainment in mathematics.
- Strong teamwork and very effective leadership.
- Productive and supportive links with parents and the wider community.

## **3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff**

The team found that parents and carers, pupils and staff were very pleased with the work of the school. They thought that the school had a very good reputation in the community and that it was well led. Pupils enjoyed being at the school and believed that they had a say in

deciding how to make the school better. All staff enjoyed working at the school and felt that they were well involved in the decision making process. Staff, parents and carers expressed concern that, given the increasing roll, the school had outgrown the accommodation provided by the premises. Parents and carers held the view that the school offered pupils a wealth of opportunity to participate in learning, sporting and cultural experiences. They also thought that gave pupils a sense of community and confidence.

#### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

##### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

The school provided a structured and well balanced curriculum delivered through the medium of Gaelic. At times, there was too much in the curriculum planned for younger pupils, and specifically those at P1. There was insufficient time for pupils to engage in practical activities such as play or to further strengthen their literacy skills. From P3 onwards, following a period of total immersion in Gaelic, pupils studied English. From P6, pupils also studied German. In addition to school-based activities staff made very good use of a range of opportunities in the community to extend pupils' choices and activities. These included involvement with other cultural groups and participation in a range of city events such as competitions, sports and performing in public. Very good attention was given to including aspects of Gaelic and Scottish culture in the curriculum.

Teachers used a good range of teaching approaches including the very effective use of direct teaching. They consistently made good use of questioning and gave pupils time to think through their responses. Teachers were very effective role models for pupils in their use of Gaelic. Pupils were motivated and enthusiastic learners and worked very well together. Most were making very good progress in a range of curricular areas. At the early stages, pupils were making good progress towards developing oral fluency in Gaelic across the curriculum. There were strengths in aspects of the expressive arts. The quality of some of the art work produced across the school was very good. In P2, for example, pupils were able to use colours and textures very effectively to create pictures. In physical education, pupils were developing good skills in dance, games and gymnastics. At P4, for example, pupils could sequence a series of basic movements such as handstands and cartwheels. A few pupils were less able to co-ordinate more controlled movements. In religious and moral education, pupils in P5 were learning about the significance of different kinds of religious buildings. They had a very good understanding of the role of the church within the Christian religion.

Pupils were achieving very well in relation to the national priorities in education. They regularly took part in competitions such as the national mod or authority-wide writing challenges and achieved very well. Pupils who were developing skills in piping, singing and playing the clarsach performed regularly in public. All pupils were developing good skills in information and communications technology (ICT). At P7 pupils were able to use ICT very effectively for a range of purposes such as accessing the internet and using PowerPoint to support and develop other areas of their learning. In schemes such as buddying and paired reading, older pupils helped younger pupils to develop their language and personal and social skills. Pupils, for whom Gaelic was a second language, were very confident and keen to use it in conversations

with others. The pupil council was clear about its role and knew that it could influence how the school worked. Overall, pupils were developing good skills in citizenship. As part of an enterprise project, pupils in P1/P2 had produced a language game which they had sold to parents who were learning Gaelic. Senior pupils showed initiative and creativity by organising and managing fund raising and social activities. P7 pupils produced a weekly radio programme for the school.

## **Languages**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in Gaelic was good. Levels of attainment in writing had improved in recent years and were now overtaking attainment in reading. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels. Almost all pupils not attaining at these levels were making good progress. A small number required more focussed support with specific aspects of language. Overall, pupils responded well to a good range of appropriately challenging classwork. At the early stages, pupils' oral skills were developing well. At the middle and upper stages, pupils had a good understanding of Gaelic grammar and idiom. They were able to talk with confidence to each other and with adults about a range of topics. By P7 most pupils could read with fluency, understanding and expression and could identify key features of the text read. Across the school, pupils' skills in writing were very good. They wrote very well for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. Their writing was well constructed and made good use of expressive language as appropriate.

Pupils' attainment in English was good. By the end of P7, pupils were attaining national levels of attainment in English language in line with their achievements in Gaelic language. By P7, pupils were reading a varied and challenging range of books for pleasure. In group discussions, they were able to identify similarities and differences in poems and stories they had read. The very good skills identified in their Gaelic writing were also evident in their English writing.

Pupils in P6 were beginning to use basic phrases and classroom vocabulary in German. They were confident and enthusiastic about learning a third language.

## **Mathematics**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Levels of attainment had been consistently high for several years. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels. Pupils who had not attained these levels were progressing at an appropriate pace through their classwork. Pupils' skills in mental calculation were well developed from the early stages onwards. Pupils in P2 could collect and display information on pictorial graphs. At the middle stages, most pupils had a good grasp of number facts and could identify a range of shapes accurately. By P7, pupils had a good understanding of the strategies used for problem-solving and enquiry. They had a sound knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They made good use of spreadsheets to organise and display information.

## 5. How well are pupils supported?

The school made very good provision for ensuring pupils' care and welfare. Procedures for dealing with areas such as child protection and bullying were in place. Pupils and staff were clear as to what they should do if they had concerns. Pupils had a good understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. After school, a number of groups provided extra-curricular activities for pupils. In communications to parents, it was not always sufficiently clear who was responsible for pupils' care and welfare when activities were not run by the school.

Staff paid good attention to meeting pupils' learning needs. They had put a good range of approaches in place to support second language learning such as very effective parental support activities and the production of a range of good quality resources. Teachers took good account of pupils' needs in classwork. Overall, classroom assistants supported pupils and teachers well but they could be used more effectively in classes to focus more closely on supporting individual pupils with identified needs. Staff did not always assess the needs of all pupils with specific difficulties in sufficient detail in order to allow them to target individualised programmes to best effect. The principal teacher, who had responsibility for leading support for learning, had made a very good start towards developing useful assessment materials for pupils with specific language difficulties.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	There were weaknesses in the overall quality of the accommodation. The school had outgrown the premises which it occupied and space was too restricted. In particular, the space available in the P1 classroom presented a potential safety hazard and limited the amount of practical learning that could take place. Additionally, the small playground offered limited space and freedom of movement for pupils to play and exercise. Staff made good use of extra areas such as the dining hall and a nearby play area to alleviate the pressure on space. The fabric of the building was good but some aspects required to be assessed more effectively for risk. Security was effective. The building was accessible for people with disabilities. It was very well used for after-school and evening activities for pupils and the wider community.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The school was characterised by a strong community spirit. A sense of pride and achievement was evident. Corridor and classroom displays promoted an active, stimulating and enriching environment for learning. Staff expectations for work and behaviour were clear. Staff used positive reward systems to promote good behaviour and encourage communication in Gaelic. Pupils responded well to these challenges. They were relaxed and courteous with staff and visitors alike. They exercised responsibilities and expressed their views on a range of issues. Relationships at all levels were very good. Staff worked very well as a team and morale was high. They used regular assemblies to worship together and to celebrate achievement. The school was actively involved in a number of fundraising events for charity. Staff's dealings with pupils and parents promoted a sense of equality and fairness.
Partnership with parents and the community	The headteacher and staff had successfully established very good partnerships with parents. Parental interests were well represented through the School Board and Comunn nam Parant (CnP) <sup>1</sup> . Both had close links with the school and gave strong support to all the school's activities. The school communicated regularly with parents through good quality bilingual newsletters, reports on pupils' progress and a very informative handbook. An open evening early in the school session offered parents the opportunity to meet the staff and view the resources their children would be using. The school had recently set up a homework network to assist pupils and parents who were not fluent in Gaelic. They also ran weekly evening classes for parents to learn the language. In the wider community, the school was held in high regard and received many invitations for pupils to participate in public events. The school encouraged links with special interest groups such as Sradagan <sup>2</sup> and the Bangla Centre <sup>3</sup> .

## 7. Improving the school

In the four years since the establishment of the school the headteacher and staff had demonstrated the ability to continuously improve. They worked closely together to provide a high quality of education for pupils. The headteacher provided very good leadership and was committed to improving the school. She knew parents, staff and

<sup>1</sup> National body to represent parental interests in Gaelic medium education.

<sup>2</sup> Gaelic medium community groups for 5 to 12 year olds.

<sup>3</sup> Local Bangladeshi community centre.

pupils well and had a very good understanding of the issues affecting the school's development. She was a thoughtful and reflective practitioner. The principal teacher was a highly effective classroom teacher and a good role model and mentor for the probationer teachers. She was developing her own knowledge for identifying pupils' needs and supporting their learning.

Good arrangements were in place to evaluate the work of the school. These included development planning, regular classroom observations and monitoring of pupils' work, and tracking of pupils' attainments. Staff regularly reflected on their practice. Consultations with parents, staff and pupils about aspects of the school's work had taken place. Monitoring activities were not always sufficiently well linked to development plan priorities to enable staff to concentrate on key projects.

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:

- address accommodation issues as highlighted in this report;
- make sure that responsibilities for pupils' care and welfare in activities not run by the school were more clearly defined;
- improve approaches for identifying and supporting pupils' specific learning needs; and
- develop a more focussed approach to evaluating the work of the school.

### **What happens next?**

As a result of the 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 and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents and carers. HM Inspectors will remain in contact with the education authority and the school in relation to accommodation issues and with a view to exploring further the features of good practice identified in the inspection.

Joan Mackay  
HM Inspector

11 May 2004

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Leadership

### **We judged the following to be good**

- Pupils' attainment in Gaelic language
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Self-evaluation

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- Accommodation and facilities

### **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><b>What pleased parents and carers most</b></p>	<p><b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school was well led and had a good reputation in the local community.</li> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome in the school.</li> <li>• Their children enjoyed being at school.</li> <li>• Teachers in the school set high standards for pupil attainment.</li> <li>• Parents' evenings were helpful and informative, and school reports gave useful information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of larger accommodation to better suit the needs of the school.</li> <li>• The provision of better playground facilities.</li> <li>• Information from the school about its priorities for improving the education of pupils.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pleased pupils most</b></p>	<p><b>What pupils would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoyed being at school and got on well with other pupils.</li> <li>• They felt safe and well looked after in school.</li> <li>• Teachers told them when they had done something well and helped them when they were stuck.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of better playground facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pleased all staff most</b></p>	<p><b>What staff would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was effective communication amongst staff and the school was well led.</li> <li>• Pupils were enthusiastic about learning and success was celebrated regularly.</li> <li>• They worked hard to promote good links with the local community.</li> </ul>	<p>Support staff would like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better use of training time and more regular involvement in discussions about achieving school priorities.</li> </ul>

## **How can you contact us?**

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, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at the above address. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

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