

**Killearn Primary School
Stirling Council
31 August 2004**

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1. Background

Killearn Primary School was inspected in May 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 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, 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, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), the Provost and a group of parents.

The school serves the village of Killearn. At the time of the inspection the roll was 258, including 46 in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was well above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- High levels of attainment in English language and mathematics.
- The strong emphasis on personal and social development, including the knowledge, skills and values related to education for citizenship.
- The clear vision and sense of direction provided by the headteacher.
- The teamwork and commitment of staff.
- Very good links with parents and the wider community.
- Very effective assistance offered to individuals and pupils with additional support needs.

3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff

Parents and carers, pupils and staff expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Parents and carers were very positive about the leadership of the school and its reputation in the community. Pupils were happy at the school and felt involved in deciding how to make it better. All staff were very positive about their roles within the school.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided a broad, balanced and very well planned curriculum. The programmes for environmental studies and religious and moral education developed well pupils' awareness of the world around them and the contrasts from their own lifestyles. There was good emphasis on developing practical skills in science and technology and particularly effective use of drama as a means of enhancing pupils' personal and social development. Pupils at P6 and P7 learned French. There was very good attention to enterprise education. Overall, the curriculum was very well related to developing education for citizenship.

The quality of teaching was consistently good and in some cases very good. Teachers planned carefully to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. There was good use overall of direct teaching, although additional pace and challenge was needed in some lessons. There was regular and successful use of group discussion as a means of increasing pupils' confidence and capacity to learn from each other. Consistent and very effective attention was given to reviewing with pupils what they had learned. The school was implementing a new homework policy which was ensuring a wider variety of appropriate tasks. Pupils at all stages responded with enthusiasm and interest to tasks and activities and were prepared to express their views and ask questions. Most applied themselves well both to independent and co-operative work. Self-assessment and peer assessment were used well to encourage pupils' independence and responsibility for their own learning. There was effective use of national tests to complement teachers' broader professional judgements of pupils' progress.

Classroom approaches offered many opportunities for pupils' personal and social development, with a significant degree of challenge at the upper stages. Pupils at all stages regularly presented information to the class and were confident in expressing their views within discussion groups. They made very effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in their learning. The school's Literacy Week provided very good experience in practical language skills. At P7, pupils had developed particularly good teamwork through producing a daily school newsletter throughout the week to tight deadlines. Enterprise education initiatives at P6 had also allowed pupils to develop their life skills through setting up a company, producing and marketing goods for sale and distributing profits to good causes. An annual residential experience for P6 and P7 pupils had been successful in developing teamwork and a sense of shared and personal responsibility. Pupils at all stages responded very well to the opportunities to take personal responsibility, including the pupil council, the house system and the buddying system. Pupils had access to a good range of extra-curricular activities.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Over the last three years, there had been consistently high and improving levels of attainment in reading and sustained improvements in writing. Both were well above national averages, with many pupils throughout the school exceeding national levels. Pupils

performed well in course work. They talked clearly and with confidence. Most were able to listen for information and instructions and were able to contribute well to class and group discussions. Pupils read fluently and with understanding. They were confident in discussing books and by P7 had built up a good overall knowledge about language. Some required wider knowledge of authors, the way writers achieve their effects and different genres of writing. Pupils wrote well for a wide range of purposes, including functional and imaginative writing. Writing was well presented. Standards of spelling were good overall.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good. In recent years the school had consistently improved pupils' attainment. Almost all pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. Many were exceeding these levels. Pupils performed well in their coursework and were making very good progress. Pupils were particularly effective in written and mental calculation. They showed good understanding of shape and were skilled in using graphs for information. At all stages, pupils were confident and skilled in using and discussing strategies to help them solve problems.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Overall, the school supported pupils very well. Pastoral care was very good. Staff had very good knowledge of individuals and a high degree of concern for their welfare. Teachers met pupils' needs particularly well at the middle and upper stages where pupils benefited from some very challenging work. Pupils at all stages were well cared for and supported. Pupils were well supported by classroom assistants and other non-teaching staff. Staff and pupils were aware of and understood the school's procedures for child protection and for dealing with instances of bullying.

There was very effective assistance for pupils with additional support needs. The visiting teacher worked well with the deputy headteacher and class teachers to plan and deliver support for individuals and to monitor their progress. She also provided useful staff development for staff. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were well maintained and set out clear strategies for supporting individuals. There were good links with agencies outwith the school in supporting pupils with additional needs, including language and mobility impairments and behavioural difficulties. The school was participating in a pilot project in West Stirlingshire aimed at partnership working to support pupils with language and communication difficulties. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress with their learning.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation was very good. The school had been extended and re-furbished to a high standard. Classrooms were well equipped. The school was very well provided with information and communications technology (ICT), including a computer suite and video-conferencing facilities. There was a large playground with tarmac and grass surfaces and a multi-sports area. Entrance security was appropriate. Staff made effective use of storage and display facilities to create a well organised, pleasant and stimulating environment for learning. There were interesting and varied displays of pupils' work and about school activities.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The atmosphere within the school was very positive. Pupils were polite and well behaved. They felt safe and well cared for and were enthusiastic about their school and the opportunities it offered. Relationships between teachers and pupils were very good. Staff morale was high. As part of the school's commitment to education for citizenship, pupils were given many opportunities to be involved in decisions affecting their lives in the school, including a well organised pupil council. There were regular opportunities for religious observance. Assemblies and the house system were used very effectively to promote the values of the school and to recognise the many achievements of its pupils. There was a high degree of commitment to equality and fairness, including concern to ensure that pupils with additional support needs were fully involved in the life of the school. There was systematic attention to issues of cultural, religious and social diversity within the curriculum.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had built up very good partnerships with parents and carers, the School Board and the wider community. The School Board and the Parent Teacher Association supported the school well. The school made very good use of focus groups to seek and respond to the views of parents. There were suitable opportunities for parents to see the work of the school through regular newsletters, Meet the Teacher Evenings, parents' evenings and curriculum workshops. There were briefings for parents about residential outings and transfer arrangements with the nursery and the secondary school. There was a well structured interim progress report on pupils and a full report towards the end of the session. There were many productive links with the community, including annual open days and a very well planned approach to education for work. The school made good use of parental and community expertise to support curricular projects, drama and the development of the school grounds. Pupils were involved regularly in community activities including the presentation of concerts and performances.

7. Improving the school

Killearn Primary School provided its pupils with a well organised curriculum, a stimulating environment for learning and very good support for individuals.

The headteacher displayed very good leadership. She had a clear vision of the nature and quality of education to which pupils were entitled. She placed strong emphasis on maintaining high levels of attainment, encouraging personal achievements, developing life skills and raising awareness of personal and social values. She had established very good teamwork with staff and a sustained momentum for continued improvement. She had been well supported by the depute headteacher, who fulfilled her remit effectively, particularly in relation to the organisation of continuous professional development for staff. The two principal teachers had recently been appointed and were settling well into their new roles.

Resources, policies and procedures were well organised. A very good climate of self-evaluation had been established, with regular tracking of pupils' progress and direct monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Priorities for future attention had been accurately identified through systematic analysis of the school's effectiveness. Planning for further development was based on a well constructed development plan. There was a very strong commitment to continuous professional development. The school had a high capacity for continued development and improvement.

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 the quality of teaching through ensuring increased pace and challenge at some stages;
- continue to develop the curriculum through improving programmes of study in music, art and design, as indicated in the development plan; and
- continue to develop innovative approaches to education for citizenship.

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.

Lachlan MacCallum
HM Inspector

31 August 2004

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Structure of the curriculum
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Accommodation and facilities
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be good

- The teaching process
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities

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"> • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • The school was well led and had a good reputation in the community. • They were made to feel welcome and that there was care and concern for their child. • Their children enjoyed being at school, were treated fairly and challenged to work to the best of their ability. • The school dealt well with inappropriate behaviour or matters of concern they raised. • Parents' evenings and report cards were informative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some felt that teachers needed to be better at letting them know their child's strengths and weaknesses. • Some felt that they needed more information about the standard of work expected from pupils.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed being at school. • Teachers knew them well and listened to them. • They knew what to do if they were upset. • They had a say in deciding how to make the school better. • The behaviour of pupils was good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some pupils felt their homework was not always checked.

What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was effective communication with senior managers and among staff. • They had good opportunities to be involved in decision making. • Staff liked working in the school. • Senior managers worked effectively as a team. • There was regular discussion about how to achieve school priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were very positive about all aspects of the school.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Children's 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, G1 Spur Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8079. Copies are also available on our website: 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 HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG 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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