

**Lairdland Primary School  
Kirkintilloch  
East Dunbartonshire Council  
6 March 2007**

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## 1. Background

Lairdsland Primary School was inspected in November 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, representatives of the parent-teachers' association (PTA) and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The school serves an area of Kirkintilloch. At the time of the inspection the roll was 295. Around one third of pupils attended the school from outwith the designated catchment area as a result of parental 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.

- Quality of relationships between all staff and pupils and the stimulating learning environment.
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the wider community.
- High quality learning and teaching.
- Pupils' learning experiences in science.

## 3. What are the views of parents, 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, pupils and staff were very positive about the school. All parents thought that the school had a very good reputation in the community. Almost all felt that their children enjoyed being at school and found school work stimulating and challenging. A significant number commented on the poor quality of the accommodation. Pupils

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

felt that teachers listened to them and they had a say in deciding how to make the school better. They felt safe and well looked after at school. All staff enjoyed working at the school. They felt that pupils were enthusiastic about learning and that there was effective communication between senior managers and staff. All staff and almost all parents thought that the school was well led.

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

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

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. It was broad and balanced. The headteacher had identified a need to monitor the use of additional time more closely to ensure that it met pupils' needs. Pupils were developing very good skills in information and communications technology (ICT). At P4, pupils were learning Gaelic. Across the school, pupils, with the support of the acting principal teacher, were developing very good scientific skills. They benefited from a variety of approaches to promote healthy and active lifestyles, including two hours per week of physical activity from P4 to P7. The school was making very good progress towards achieving the status of a Health Promoting school. The school's programme for personal and social development did not ensure sufficient continuity and progression in pupils' learning. There were major strengths in the quality of teaching. Teachers were highly organised and almost all used a wide range of teaching approaches which actively involved pupils in lessons. They shared learning outcomes with pupils and, in the best practice, involved pupils in setting their own learning targets. They made effective use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning experiences. Teachers questioned pupils effectively with some very good examples of questioning being used to challenge and explore pupils' thinking. Teachers made good use of homework which was suitably varied.

The quality of pupils' learning was very good. Pupils were highly motivated and keen to learn. They were confident learners, who responded very well when given responsibility for their own learning. Almost all pupils were able to work independently and enjoyed working individually and in groups. They learned effectively from each other when working in groups in science, mathematics and ICT. At P1 and P1/2, pupils had some opportunities to learn through play. However, at the early stages, teachers were not able to make effective use of learning through play, due to restrictions in the accommodation. At P6, pupils set themselves weekly learning targets and then evaluated their progress against them.

The school provided a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their wider achievements. Pupils participated in a variety of after-school clubs. Pupils in the chess club, which was run by a parent, had been successful in a recent competition. Older pupils took responsibility for supporting younger pupils through being 'playground buddies'. In classes, pupils took on a range of roles and responsibilities which enabled them to make very effective contributions to the life of the school and allowed them to develop self-confidence. Pupils were proud of their involvement in the pupil council and had been able to improve aspects of the school through discussion with staff. Pupils were developing an understanding of 'fair-testing' through the very well-planned science programme. At P6, they investigated skilfully the effect of changing the shape of an object as it passed through water. At P2/3 and P3, pupils

worked very well together designing flowers for Christmas boxes as part of their enterprise topic. Supported by the community policeman, pupils at P3 had been interviewed on television and radio as a result of being successful in a competition. Pupils at all stages had represented the school at a variety of sporting and cultural events in the local area.

### **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good and had been consistently high. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Almost all pupils were making good progress in their coursework, including most of those for whom English was an additional language. At all stages, pupils listened attentively to teachers and to each other, responded well to teachers' questioning and followed instructions well. They talked effectively in groups and were able to express their opinions well. By P7, pupils could confidently use their skills in English language in other areas of the curriculum. For example, they made clear presentations about topical issues to the others in their class. Pupils at all stages could read confidently and with understanding. They regularly read for pleasure and made good use of class libraries. At P4, pupils were able to use ICT effectively to research information. At all stages, most pupils' writing skills were developing well and most were able to write well for a variety of purposes. They applied their writing skills well in science reports.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good and had remained consistently high. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. At all stages, pupils presented information in graphs and tables. At P5, pupils used computers to present data from their science project in different graphical forms. At P1 to P3, almost all pupils were developing an understanding of number and could perform simple oral and written calculations. By P7, most pupils used fractions, decimals and percentages appropriately but some aspects of their performance were inconsistent. Higher attaining pupils were beginning to develop some skills in solving simple equations. At all stages, pupils appropriately identified two- and three-dimensional shapes and confidently discussed their properties. Pupils solved problems in real-life contexts. The school had recognised the need to provide more planned opportunities to use strategies to solve problems. Pupils were developing their skills effectively through the regular use of mathematical games.

## **5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?**

The school's approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs were good. Teachers worked very effectively with classroom assistants and support for learning assistants to support pupils' learning. Assistants were deployed well across the school and provided good support to individuals and groups in their classwork. They also provided additional support for pupils' reading. Teachers planned carefully to match tasks and activities to meet pupils' needs. There were too many groups in some classes for staff to manage their learning effectively. Planning for some curricular areas was too reliant on published texts. The school had recognised this weakness and had plans to review

approaches to planning to better meet pupils' needs. Visiting specialists provided valued support to teachers, to pupils who were experiencing difficulties with language and to those learning English as an additional language. The school was making some use of the education authority's approach to identify and track the progress of pupils experiencing learning difficulties. The school's approaches did not always meet the needs of pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning, including personal and social skills. Staff provided very effectively for those pupils with mobility problems. Despite the challenges caused by the accommodation, pupils with mobility problems took part in all aspects of the life of the school. The school had started to improve its management of support for learning.

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

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The quality of pastoral care was very good. All staff knew pupils well and were sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs. Pupils felt safe and secure. They knew what to do if they had any concerns and were confident that their needs would be met. All staff were aware of their responsibilities for child protection. Staff were about to undertake training to help them better understand the needs of pupils for whom English was an additional language. The school monitored pupils' attendance closely and took appropriate action where necessary. The school had effective arrangements in place to support the transfer of pupils from nursery to P1. There were very effective arrangements including a number of curricular projects for the transfer of P7 pupils to S1 in Lenzie Academy.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of the accommodation was weak. Staff worked hard to make the school bright and attractive. The playground was small for the number of pupils and restricted the opportunities for play. Most windows had been renewed, but there were still problems with rainwater penetration around the school. Heating was variable in its effectiveness. Some classrooms were spacious, for example, at P1 and P1/2. Other classrooms were cramped, restricting the range of teaching approaches which teachers could use. The gym was too small. Girls had to go outside to access the toilets. At lunchtimes, pupils had to be escorted out of the school grounds to reach the dining facility. A lift had been installed to enable pupils with mobility problems to access all areas of the school. The school office was very small and not well located. Security arrangements were generally appropriate.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Staff, pupils and parents had a strong sense of identity and pride in their school. Relationships between all staff and pupils were very positive. Pupils were well behaved and were enthusiastic about their learning. Teachers had high expectations for pupils' achievements. Pupils responded very well to these high expectations. The headteacher had introduced special assemblies to celebrate pupils' achievements gained out of school. Class assemblies provided good opportunities for pupils to perform and to have their success recognised. The chaplain supported the school in its arrangements for regular religious observance. There was a strong sense of mutual respect and tolerance between pupils and staff. The school had plans to introduce anti-racist approaches into its personal and social development programme. The diversity of the school and the wider community was not yet appropriately reflected and included in the curriculum.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had established very good links with parents, the School Board, the school chaplain and the wider community. The School Board was very supportive and was actively working with the education authority in the early stages of planning a new school building. Parents were kept informed through newsletters and written reports of their children's progress. Pupils and staff regularly updated the school's website. The school had developed very good links with the wider community, such as the community policeman and local businesses. The very effective links with Lenzie Academy provided very good opportunities for pupils to work with specialist teachers, such as those in home economics.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

Lairdsland Primary School provided a stimulating learning environment for its pupils. Staff and pupils enjoyed being at school. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was strong. Much of the teaching was of a very high quality and pupils' very positive attitude to learning was a key strength of the school. The recently-appointed headteacher had already taken some steps to improve aspects of the school. The school was very well placed to continue to improve.

The headteacher had only been in post for three months. In that short time, she had gained the confidence of teaching and support staff. She had a clear vision for the school. She had recognised the need to involve staff more in the decision making processes. Staff had welcomed this approach. The headteacher was well supported by the depute headteacher and the newly-appointed acting principal teacher. She had reviewed their remits to provide them with clear areas of responsibility. The depute headteacher, with the support of the headteacher, had started to improve the school's approaches to supporting pupils' learning. The acting principal teacher made a strong contribution to the school, including teaching the very well-planned science programme. Together, promoted staff were beginning to develop improved teamwork and communication across the school. The leadership across the school was good. The headteacher had sought the views of parents, pupils and staff and had already taken some steps to improve the quality of education as a result of her analysis of their views. Senior managers monitored teachers' plans and provided helpful feedback. Teachers had started to evaluate their learning and teaching. The headteacher had introduced approaches to monitor pupils' progress. She met with teachers and discussed the progress of individual pupils and groups. These approaches would be strengthened further if they focused more on pupils' skills and if all staff were involved in the discussions. The headteacher and staff had recognised the need to review the school's

approaches to presenting pupils for national assessments, to ensure that pupils' learning was secure. Overall, the school's approaches to self-evaluation were good.

### **Main points for action**

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

- the quality of the accommodation;
- meeting the needs of all pupils through improvements to planning, the curriculum, and support for pupils' learning; and
- the school's approaches to monitoring and tracking pupils' progress.

### **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.

Maureen McKenna  
HM Inspector

6 March 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.

<b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	very good

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting pupils' needs	good

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

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	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.

<b>What parents thought the school did well</b>	<b>What parents think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment.</li> <li>• The school encouraged their children to work to the best of their ability.</li> <li>• The school had explained how they could support their children with homework.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School buildings were not kept in good condition.</li> </ul>
<b>What pupils thought the school did well</b>	<b>What pupils think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers explained things clearly and helped them when they had difficulties.</li> <li>• The school helped keep them safe and healthy.</li> <li>• The behaviour of pupils in school was good.</li> <li>• The school provided good support if they were upset.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>
<b>What staff thought the school did well</b>	<b>What staff think the school could do better</b>
<p>Some staff did not answer all the questions due to the recent changes in staffing and management in the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils' success was regularly celebrated.</li> <li>• The school dealt effectively with any instances of bullying.</li> <li>• Standards set for pupils' behaviour were consistently upheld.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>

## **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 Corporate Director (Community), 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).

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, Acting HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

### **Our complaints procedure**

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://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. 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, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail [ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk).

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