

**Linnvale Primary School
Clydebank
West Dunbartonshire Council
12 February 2008**

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1. Background

Linnvale Primary School was inspected in September 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 Parent Council, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) 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 Linnvale area to the north of the Forth and Clyde canal in Clydebank. The school is part of the Clydebank High School cluster. Prior to the appointment of the current headteacher in October 2005, the school had experienced a period of instability in leadership. At the time of the inspection the roll was 237. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

The school campus also contained a community facility and an early education and childcare services centre which provided nursery education, and early morning and evening wrap-around care. The work of the centre was inspected at the same time as the school and is the subject of a separate report.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Hardworking and committed staff with the potential to deliver well for pupils.
- Steps taken by the headteacher to improve pupils' attainment in English language, deploy staff to make best use of their skills and involve staff in developing aspects of the curriculum.
- Rigorous procedures for ensuring the location of pupils absent from school.
- Resources to support most aspects of learning and teaching.

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 a sample of parents, all P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Less than a third of parents responded to the questionnaire. Almost all parents who did respond said that they felt welcome in the school and thought that their children enjoyed school. They felt that progress reports and parents' evenings kept them well informed about their children's work. Some felt that the school did not deal well with inappropriate behaviour. A significant minority wanted further information about how they could support their children's learning. Almost all pupils thought that at least one teacher knew them well and that they were expected to work hard. A fifth of pupils felt that the behaviour of pupils was good. Many reported incidents of being bullied, felt that the school did not deal well with the perpetrators and were concerned about their personal safety. A quarter did not think that all pupils were treated fairly or that staff helped to sort things out well when they were upset. Staff enjoyed working in the school. They felt there were too few opportunities to be meaningfully involved in decision making. The majority of teachers were concerned about the standards set for pupils' behaviour not being upheld consistently. Several thought that aspects of leadership of the school needed to be improved and they wanted senior managers to provide them with more detailed feedback on learning and teaching in their classrooms.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was good. Pupils had a suitably broad and overall balanced educational experience. Staff had access to good guidance on aspects of the curriculum. Recent attention to reading and writing had improved pupils' attainment. The new science programme provided good opportunities for investigations and practical activities. Pupils' skills being developed in the computer suite needed to be used more regularly across the curriculum. All pupils were allocated two hours of physical education (PE) each week, in line with national recommendations. Innovative use of additional staffing ensured all pupils had regular lessons in art and design and PE. Staff had rightly identified the need to review programmes for listening and talking, and religious and moral education. Pupils had opportunities to develop appropriate personal and social skills through the school's aim to achieve health promoting status. Skills being developed through enterprise education activities now needed to be applied across the curriculum. At the early stages, pupils had limited opportunities to learn through play. The quality of teaching was adequate overall. Teachers now planned their lessons to a common format. Most consistently shared with pupils what they wanted them to learn and explained new work clearly. Not all reviewed learning at the end of a lesson to consolidate pupils' understanding. Several made very good use of questioning to extend pupils' thinking, but this practice needed to become more consistent across the school.

The overall quality of learning was adequate. The majority of pupils were attentive and keen to learn. However, too many became involved in low level disruptive behaviour

in classes. In addition, a small number of pupils, particularly at the upper stages, regularly presented challenging behaviour which adversely affected the learning environment. Classroom management and organisation in too many classes required review. At P1 and P3, pupils understood the clear learning targets set for them and knew what they had to do to improve their work. However, across the school, too many lessons lacked sufficient pace and were directed at whole classes. Pupils needed more opportunities to be active learners and to work collaboratively with others to discuss issues and solve problems. They were not always confident when working independently and needed to be given greater responsibility for organising their own learning. At the early stages, pupils engaged enthusiastically in musical activities. At all stages, pupils' skills in science and art and design were developing well. Across the school, pupils' mapping skills were poorly developed. Homework was regular at all stages, but tasks were repetitive and lacked variety and purpose.

The school took some effective steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements, but had yet to develop these systematically. Pupils at the middle and upper stages developed sporting skills and their understanding of fair play through taking part in a range of sports, including athletics, football, hockey and netball. Most appreciated the need to stay active and fit and the importance of eating a balanced diet. At all stages, pupils were developing their understanding of the needs of others through their support of a wide range of charities, including links with a project in Uganda. Pupils' environmental awareness was being raised as a result of the school's work to achieve green flag status through Eco Schools (Scotland). Many pupils took an active interest in recycling items and displayed a good understanding of sustainable developments. A very successful school show had developed pupils' skills in performing before an audience. Some pupils were acquiring good citizenship skills by learning to take responsibility through membership of the pupil council and junior road safety group. Older pupils developed their personal and social skills through participation in a residential outdoor activity.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Attainment in writing had improved over recent years whilst standards in reading had been variable. Almost all pupils at the early stages and the majority at the middle and upper stages had attained appropriate levels in writing. Some exceeded these levels in reading and writing. Most pupils at the early stages and the majority at the middle and upper stages had attained these levels in reading. The school did not maintain accurate records of pupils' attainment in listening and talking. At the early stages, pupils listened well to teachers. They were less able to listen to each other in group situations. At the middle and upper stages, the majority of pupils listened attentively to teachers' instructions, but lacked the necessary skills to sustain effective group discussions. Pupils at the early stages read fluently, talked confidently about what they had read and readily identified key facts. At the middle and upper stages, pupils read regularly for enjoyment, but they were less able to discuss how writers achieved desired effects. At all stages, pupils were improving their skills in writing. They presented their work well and had good opportunities for extended writing.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was adequate. In recent years, attainment in mathematics had improved. Across the stages, most pupils were achieving appropriate levels of attainment. Several were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Most pupils were making steady progress in their course work, but were capable of coping with greater challenge. They were able to handle information in graphs and charts appropriate to their stage. Skills in using computers to handle information were at an early stage of development. At P1 to P3, pupils had made a good start to developing early number skills. Most at P4 to P7 were competent in handling number processes and calculations involving money, but many had difficulty in recalling number and multiplication facts promptly and accurately. Most could tell the time accurately, many were less confident in applying their knowledge of length and weight in practical situations. Across the stages, pupils could accurately name common two- and three-dimensional shapes. They were often unsure in comparing the properties of shapes, but had a good understanding of lines of symmetry. The quality of pupils' presentation of mathematical work was variable. At all stages, pupils' problem solving skills were improving. Pupils needed to be able to apply more readily a range of strategies to solve problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Across the school, approaches in classes to meeting pupils' learning needs were adequate. Tasks and activities did not always meet the needs of all pupils. As a consequence, some pupils struggled to understand content and higher attaining pupils were insufficiently challenged. The pace of learning was often too slow. The support for learning teacher and early intervention teacher supported identified groups of pupils effectively. The principal teacher also supported groups and individuals with additional support needs. The depute headteacher had recently started to support a group of pupils experiencing difficulties in managing their behaviour. Behaviour contracts had been drawn up for several pupils, but specific improvement targets were not consistently applied in classes. These approaches had yet to have a sufficiently positive impact on the majority of pupils. A range of external agencies provided effective support to assist pupils with a variety of additional support needs. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were in place with appropriate short- and long-term learning targets. Parents were suitably involved in agreeing IEPs. A significant number of pupils also had formalised support plans.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>The overall quality of pastoral care was adequate. Staff were clearly committed to trying to deliver a good quality of care and concern for pupils' welfare. Good attention was given to the administration of medicines and safe Internet use by pupils. Very good procedures operated to check on the location of absent pupils where parents failed to contact the school to offer an explanation. All teaching staff had received training in child protection. However, there were inconsistencies in the effectiveness with which the emotional and social needs of some pupils were being met. Despite whole school efforts to promote positive behaviour, the instances of bullying and poor behaviour were too frequent. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour often went unchallenged or were dealt with inconsistently. A breakfast club provided a good healthy start to the school day for an increasing number of pupils. Pupils were positive about the quality of school lunches and the varied menu.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. The school was clean and well maintained by a committed janitor and cleaning team. Most staff made effective use of displays of pupils' work. Available space was well used, including large outdoor play areas. Appropriate attention was given to building security and supervision of pupils at breaks. Access for those with restricted mobility was only possible to the ground floor. Storage of various items around the hall was a potential safety hazard for pupils engaging in PE. The school was well resourced. It had recently refreshed its computer hardware and software. Interactive whiteboards supported learning and teaching, although computers were not yet networked.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>Relationships between teachers and pupils were good overall, but they were inconsistent and in several classes were not conducive to good learning. Teachers were supportive of each other. Pupils felt that not all pupils were treated fairly. Teachers' use of praise to motivate pupils was not yet consistent. The implementation of strategies to promote positive behaviour was at an early stage. Some staff looked to senior managers too often to provide support to help them deal with poor pupil behaviour. Staff needed to have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and attainment. Some pupils did not have a sufficiently high expectation of their own potential to achieve. A good variety of class and school strategies was in place to recognise and reward good behaviour and work. These strategies needed to be applied more consistently across the school. In the previous two years, a significant minority of pupils had been excluded from school as a consequence of their unacceptable behaviour. Almost all pupils took a pride in wearing school uniform. The school chaplain provided the school with good and regular support. The school used regular assemblies to celebrate pupils' successes and for religious observance. It had taken good steps to promote anti-sectarianism by working in partnership with the neighbouring St Eunan's Primary School. Pupils were participating in a joint project with children in the developing world. A racial equality policy was in place, but there was scope for greater promotion of cultural diversity through the curriculum. Links with Linnvale Early Education and Childcare Centre were only partly effective and steps were being taken to address this matter. Pupils at P7 were suitably prepared for transition to Clydebank High School.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and the community</p>	<p>The school had good partnerships with parents. The Parent Council and PTA gave valuable support. Several parents provided useful support within the school. Regular newsletters, helpful annual pupil progress reports and twice-yearly parents' evenings kept parents suitably informed. Parents were consulted about potentially sensitive aspects of health education. Questionnaires had been used to establish parents' views on several matters, for example, to consider setting up a 'walking bus' to improve pupils' safety when travelling to and from school. There was scope to improve the school's links with the wider community.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

The quality of education provided in Linnvale Primary School had some good features such as the improvement in pupils' attainment in writing and in mathematics. However, there was scope for further improvement. A climate for effective learning had not been consistently well established in classes. Lessons did not always meet the needs of all pupils, the pace of learning was insufficiently brisk and too many pupils were inattentive in class. Staff did not always handle well instances of pupils' inappropriate behaviour. Pupils did not always feel they were treated fairly and equally. Relationships between pupils and teachers were good in some classes, but needed to be improved across the school.

The headteacher had a vision for the school and had improved several important aspects of its work. She had involved teachers in developing policies to inform classroom practice and in improving their planning. She had taken positive steps to improve pupils' attainment, to improve communication among staff and to deploy staff carefully to make best use of their skills. All staff should work together to build on these improvements, which were at an early stage of development. The deputy headteacher provided the headteacher with good support and had been successful in developing support for pupils. Her remit involved spending considerable time managing pupils with challenging behaviour and this needed to be reviewed in discussion with class teachers. The principal teacher operated within her remit, but played a very limited role in wider leadership for learning. The headteacher had introduced more rigorous procedures to monitor pupils' progress. The management and organisation of classroom practice was not consistent across the school. Senior managers were at an early stage of monitoring classroom practice and the outcomes of this development had yet to lead to improvements in pupils' learning. Teachers had made little use of quality indicators developed nationally to evaluate their work. With the establishment of a consistently effective climate for learning and teaching and effective teamwork, further improvements to self-evaluation and the continued support of the education authority, the school has the potential to be able to develop and improve its provision for pupils.

Main points for action

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

- staff teamwork in establishing a consistently effective climate for learning;
- the overall quality of learning and teaching;
- pupils' achievement; and
- monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met effectively.

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 continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in a report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Alistair F Marquis
HM Inspector

12 February 2008

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	good
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	adequate

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	good
Leadership across the school	adequate
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"> • Their children enjoyed school and found classwork interesting. • School reports on their children's progress were helpful. • Parents' evenings were informative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with inappropriate behaviour more effectively. • Share plans for improving the education of pupils. • Explain how parents can support their children's education. • Inform parents of their children'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"> • Teachers regularly checked homework and helped them with any difficulties they had with classwork. • They were expected to work hard and teachers told them when they had done something well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of pupils, including dealing more effectively with incidents involving bullying. • Treat all pupils fairly and equally.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set high standards for pupils' achievement. • Staff show concern for pupils' care and welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal much more effectively with poor pupil behaviour. • Communicate to parents the standards expected of pupils. • Improve opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes. • Support staff wanted better use made of their training time.

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 Executive Director of Education 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 and Communications Team, 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.

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