

**Maddiston Primary School
Falkirk Council
6 September 2005**

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1. Background

Maddiston Primary School was inspected in May 2005 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 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-staff association (PSA), and a group of parents.

The school serves the Maddiston area of Falkirk. At the time of the inspection the roll was 344, including 60 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The school's ethos and the concern shown by all staff for pupils' care and welfare.
- Well behaved, polite and friendly pupils and the school's commitment to promoting positive behaviour.
- Strong and productive links with parents, agencies and the wider community.
- Levels of support for pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning.
- The commitment and teamwork of all staff.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, 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 positive about many aspects of the school. Parents felt that their children enjoyed being at school and were treated fairly. They thought that teachers set high standards and that children were encouraged to work to the best of their abilities. They felt that the school was well led and many were very pleased with

the standards of education provided. Around a quarter of the parents had concerns about the poor condition of the school buildings. Pupils enjoyed school and thought that teachers were good at telling them how they were doing. They felt that the school helped them to stay safe and healthy. Around a quarter of the pupils felt that the behaviour of other pupils was not good. All staff enjoyed working in the school and felt that they operated very effectively as a team.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided pupils with a well-planned and balanced curriculum. Teachers gave careful attention to personal and social education including healthy living and consideration for the environment. There were a few examples of teachers using computers effectively to develop pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT). However, teachers did not make enough use of ICT to support and extend pupils' learning in all areas of the curriculum. The expressive arts programme did not always ensure continuity in pupils' learning or consistently high quality learning experiences for all pupils. The overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers planned their lessons very well. They explained ideas and instructions clearly and used questioning effectively to develop pupils' understanding. Most used praise well to encourage and motivate pupils. Following a recent whole school initiative, teachers shared with pupils what they were expected to learn from lessons, and reviewed the activities with them at the end of each lesson to see if the learning objectives had been achieved. Most teachers marked pupils' work carefully and gave them useful written feedback on how they could improve. They used homework tasks effectively to support pupils' learning, and to allow them to share aspects of their work with their parents. Play was very well used at the early stages to enrich pupils' learning experiences through consolidating and extending classwork. Teachers did not always take sufficient account of assessment information to build on previous learning and ensure challenge for all pupils. At P4 to P7, some teaching groups in mathematics were too large to meet pupils' needs. In aspects of English language, social subjects and science, teachers relied too heavily on textbooks and worksheets.

Most pupils were well behaved, hardworking and keen to learn. They listened attentively to teachers. There were some very good examples of pupils working together and learning from each other. For example, when working in drama and on poetry activities, pupils worked in pairs to offer constructive criticism to each other. At P3 and P7 there was a strong emphasis on enterprise in education and pupils were developing good skills in team working, researching and designing. However, in general, pupils had too few opportunities to carry out investigations, take part in practical activities and work independently.

Many pupils had performed well in initiatives relating to health education and citizenship. They learned about the roles of responsible citizens through the school's links with the local community and the work of the pupil council. Pupils at P6 and P7 undertook duties such as acting as playground helpers and buddies. Many pupils developed skills and performed well in extra-curricular activities, including a range of

sports and games. They participated in a number of competitions and a group of senior pupils had recently reached the final of the Rotary Club Inter-Schools Quiz. Pupils in P7 spoke highly of the annual residential outdoor experience and trip abroad which enhanced their self-confidence and developed their skills in working as part of a team. Pupils had learned to have concern for others through contributing to several charities, including “LEPRA” and supporting a local hospice by raising funds for their patients and showing an ongoing interest in their welfare.

English language

The overall quality of pupils’ attainment in English language was good. In recent years, levels of pupils’ attainment in reading and writing had been variable, but were showing signs of improvement. Most pupils were attaining in line with national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Across the school, some pupils achieved expected levels of attainment early, but this progress was not always sustained as pupils progressed from stage to stage. There were significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls in both reading and writing, with boys performing less well, particularly at P6 and P7. Pupils for whom English was an additional language and those requiring additional support with aspects of reading and writing were making good progress. Pupils at P1 and P2 were making very good progress in developing their early literacy skills. At all stages, pupils listened well to teacher-led discussions and stories and responded to questions effectively. They performed less well in group discussions or when asked to talk about their own ideas, feelings and experiences. Most pupils were fluent readers and talked well about books they had read. However, a small number of pupils showed little interest in reading for pleasure. At P7, higher-attaining pupils produced very good imaginative stories. Pupils wrote regularly at length and for a range of purposes, but few could comment critically on aspects of the writer’s craft.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils’ attainment in mathematics was good. In recent years levels of attainment had fluctuated but recent initiatives to raise attainment were beginning to have an impact. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels of attainment. A significant number of pupils were attaining these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Those experiencing difficulties in their learning were making steady progress. From P3 to P7 most pupils could organise and interpret information from graphs very well. However, at P7 they were not yet competent in using databases and spreadsheets. Pupils at P1 and P2 had made a very good start in numeracy. Across the school, almost all pupils performed well in written calculations, but were less skilled in mental calculations. Pupils’ knowledge and understanding of fractions and decimals was not well developed. At P7, pupils were not all confident in discussing the properties of shapes. At all stages, pupils knew about different strategies for problem solving, and were developing very good skills in applying them.

5. How well are pupils supported

The school had established a caring and supportive environment for all pupils. Staff knew their pupils well and were sensitive to their individual personal, social and

emotional needs. They implemented fully the school's policy for care and welfare, including anti-bullying, and made appropriate use of child protection guidelines. Healthy eating was actively promoted at lunch times, in the new range of healthy options at the tuck shop and by the provision of free fruit for pupils in P1 and P2. There were very good induction programmes for pupils transferring from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1.

Staff provided a very good level of support for pupils with additional learning needs. The learning support teacher identified pupils' needs at an early stage. She met regularly with class teachers and support assistants to plan appropriate individualised educational programmes for them. Learning targets were shared with parents and pupils. Support assistants made a very positive contribution in classes across the school. The school had very effective links with other agencies to provide for pupils' specific needs. The Bilingual and Traveller Support Service gave regular input and organised specialised resources to ensure that all pupils for whom English was an additional language had equal and appropriate access to the curriculum. The school had appropriate procedures in place for maintaining Records of Needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was fair. The school was spread across four separate buildings. The main school building housed pupils from P4 to P7 and the administration offices. Another building was used for the nursery and P1 and P2. Pupils in P3 were located in temporary hatted accommodation and a fourth building was used as the dining hall. Each building had an appropriate security system. However, some aspects of building and school grounds' security required review and were discussed with the headteacher and education authority. The hall in the main school building was too small to be used for physical education and pupils had to use a nearby community centre. There was limited access for pupils with mobility difficulties. Resources were distributed across three buildings and storage facilities were too limited for the range of materials and equipment staff wished to use. The education authority was aware of the weaknesses in accommodation and a new building was planned, for completion in 2007. Despite the limitations of the accommodation, staff had worked very hard to create an attractive environment. Classrooms were bright and stimulating and pupils' work was displayed attractively throughout the school to promote their achievements.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The headteacher and staff had created a very warm and welcoming environment for pupils, parents and visitors. Staff and pupils were proud of their school. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour, standards of work and presentation were high. However, they needed to have higher expectations of pupils' wider achievements. Pupils were well informed about a wide range of faiths and cultures. The school encouraged tolerance and respect and promoted racial equality. Pupils' achievements were celebrated at regular assemblies and on displays throughout the school. The chaplain was a regular visitor and provided pupils with good opportunities for regular religious observance. Pupils' experiences in religious and moral education and personal and social development were effective in helping them develop appropriate values and attitudes, including a sense of equality and fairness.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had very good relationships with parents and the wider community. The School Board and PSA gave valuable support to the school. Parents regularly helped with fund raising, organising the library and with educational outings. Staff used a range of methods to keep parents well informed about the work of the school. These included regular newsletters, and helpful home-school diaries in which teachers sent home detailed weekly comments on each child. Parents were well informed about sensitive aspects of the school's health education programme and were able to view the resources used. Staff met regularly with colleagues from associated schools in the area and were currently working together to develop personal learning plans for pupils. The school had developed very productive links with the local family centre and was working closely with its staff to develop a nurture group to support vulnerable pupils.

7. Improving the school

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

Maddiston Primary School provided a caring and supportive learning environment in which pupils were encouraged to work hard. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was good. Teaching and support staff had successfully established an environment where most pupils were developing positive attitudes to learning. They now needed to focus their efforts on improving aspects of learning and teaching and

using assessment information more effectively to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils.

The headteacher was committed to the school and provided good leadership. He had earned the support of staff and parents and developed a positive school ethos. He was open and approachable and ensured the care and welfare of pupils and staff. He had given a very high priority to promoting positive behaviour and had significantly improved teamwork. He had introduced systems for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress, but these approaches were not yet sufficiently robust or systematic. The deputy headteacher was actively involved in developing aspects of the school, for example the level of parental involvement, the timetabling of support staff and the teaching of French. She carried out these duties very effectively. She had made a very significant contribution to the school's behaviour management policy. However, her remit, which was largely administrative, did not enable her to be actively involved in improving the quality of learning and teaching across the school. The principal teacher demonstrated a sound knowledge of her areas of responsibility and her teaching was a model of good practice. The school had introduced some procedures for reviewing its work and planning for improvement. The headteacher reviewed pupils' progress with teachers and set target dates for attainment of national levels. Many of these were set too far ahead to support teachers in setting short-term targets for pupils. The management team monitored the quality of teachers' planning and regularly checked samples of pupils' work. They visited classes to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences and gave helpful written feedback. Some of this feedback had been used by teachers, for example to improve the way they planned aspects of their classwork. However, procedures for self-evaluation needed to be developed in a more focused and rigorous way. Under the leadership of the headteacher, and with the support of a committed staff, the school is well placed to build on its strengths and improve further the quality of pupils' learning.

Main points for action

The school and the education authority should take action to improve attainment, aspects of learning and teaching and meeting pupils' needs fully. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to raise attainment, particularly in English language for boys;
- improve learning and teaching in information and communications technology;
- make better use of assessment information to plan classwork which is appropriately challenging and consistently well matched to pupils' needs; and
- improve procedures for tracking attainment and monitoring the quality of pupils' experiences.

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

May Geddes
HM Inspector

6 September 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Leadership
- 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>What pleased parents and carers most</p>	<p>What parents and carers would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils were treated fairly in the school. • Staff made them feel welcome. • Parents' evenings were helpful and informative. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to see the school buildings kept in better order. • Some parents wanted a clearer idea of the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.
<p>What pleased pupils most</p>	<p>What pupils would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils enjoyed being at school and felt that teachers were good at letting them know how their learning could be improved. • Teachers explained things clearly and helped them when they were having difficulties with their work. • The school helped them keep safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some pupils felt that staff were not good at dealing with bullying and that the behaviour of other pupils could be improved. • A few pupils felt that other pupils were not always treated fairly by staff.
<p>What pleased staff most</p>	<p>What staff would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff enjoyed working in the school and all thought that it was well led. • There was effective communication between senior managers and staff, and mutual respect between staff and pupils. • All staff worked hard to promote good relations with the local community. • Staff showed care and concern for pupils and celebrated their successes regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some staff felt that training time could be used more effectively. • A few support staff wanted to see standards set for pupils' behaviour being consistently upheld by the school.

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 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, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 2917. 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 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.

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, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk

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