

**Moniaive Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
12 December 2006**

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1. Background

Moniaive Primary School was inspected in September 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 and a number 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 village of Moniaive and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 62. 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.

- The positive and inclusive ethos of the school.
- Effective partnership with pupils, parents and the wider community.
- A well planned curriculum which was helping to extend the range of pupils' achievements.
- The inclusive approach to meeting pupils' needs and the progress of pupils with additional support needs.
- The leadership of the headteacher and the teamwork and commitment of staff.

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

Parents were very positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, they appreciated the efforts made by the school to establish a partnership with parents and the community and the quality of the information they received about their children's progress. Pupils were equally positive about the school and their teachers. They thought they were well taught and encouraged to do well. They felt they were involved in decisions about their school. They felt safe and well cared for. A few pupils and parents expressed concerns about bullying, but in discussion felt that the school had taken appropriate steps to address any issues arising. Staff were very positive about the management of the school and their involvement in decision making. They enjoyed their jobs and felt part of a close and effective team.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum provided pupils with a broad and well balanced experience in each curricular area and had been a focus for systematic school improvement over recent years. There was particularly good attention to ensuring that pupils' learning built up from stage to stage, including effective use of cyclical programmes in environmental studies and religious and moral education. The school was working steadily towards increasing the time allocated to physical education and monitored closely the range of physical activities undertaken. The school had been creative, in line with the principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, in extending the range of pupils' achievements through the arts, sport and culture and in enterprise and environmental education. Outdoor education, including a residential experience, was an important and productive part of the curriculum for pupils at the upper stages. Lessons were well organised. Teachers shared learning intentions with pupils and built clearly on what had gone before. There was good dialogue and interaction with pupils, including effective questioning and encouragement to pupils to contribute their views. Teachers took care to ensure that pupils understood tasks and important ideas. Some teaching of English language, art and design and environmental studies was particularly lively, with very good use of local contexts to make learning accessible and interesting for pupils. There was consistent and effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a medium for learning and teaching. The school had a clear homework policy. The organisation and pace of a few lessons needed to be improved, to ensure that tasks were completed and pupils had time to review what they had learned.

Pupils were well motivated and enthusiastic in most aspects of their learning. Those at the early stages took responsibility for their own learning and were able to work independently. They responded very well to the many opportunities for active learning, including imaginative play activities. At other stages, pupils worked independently and well through regular use of ICT, in research tasks and in presenting their work. They were capable of learning collaboratively, but some would benefit from more experience

of group discussion and reporting. The pace of pupils' learning was brisk overall. Occasionally, pupils did not have enough responsibility for their learning in aspects of reading and in problem-solving in mathematics.

The school took very good steps to help pupils at all stages develop their wider achievements, through a range of interesting activities which encouraged independence, initiative and a sense of responsibility. Pupils responded well to the challenges of taking the school towards Eco School status through their work in laying out and tending the school gardens. All pupils engaged in sports, musical and cultural activities as part of the school's processes for promoting positive behaviour and encouraging self-confidence. Older pupils had benefited in confidence and teamwork from involvement in organisation of events, within the school and for the community as a whole, and from their residential outdoor education experience. The pupil council was well organised and members were responsive to the views of their classmates. Pupils at all stages had participated in devising the school travel plan, to support safe pupil journeys to and from school, and in the arrangements for the promotion of healthy eating. Older pupils took an active part in helping younger pupils through the buddying scheme.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Pupils were making consistently good progress in their classwork and most were achieving the anticipated national levels of attainment. A significant number at the early and middle stages were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making steady progress from their prior levels of attainment. Pupils were articulate and able to convey information and express their views readily. They listened well for information and to instructions, but were less prepared to listen to the views of others in discussions. Pupils read fluently, accurately and with comprehension. Most enjoyed books and had responded well to the school's efforts to broaden the range of books they read. They lacked some confidence in discussing the ways writers achieve their effects. Pupils wrote competently for an appropriate range of purposes, but there was scope for improving the quality of their imaginative writing. Standards of handwriting, spelling and grammar were good overall.

Mathematics

In mathematics, the overall quality of pupils' attainment was good. Pupils were making good progress in their coursework. Most were achieving the appropriate national levels of attainment. A significant number of pupils at the early and middle stages were exceeding these levels. Pupils with additional support needs were progressing steadily. Pupils at the early stages were making good progress in the initial stages of developing numeracy and mathematical skills. Pupils at all stages were able to collect, collate and display information in a variety of forms. Pupils' skills in mental mathematics were sound. Most performed well in written calculations with sound knowledge of multiplication facts. They were competent in using money and in measurement. Pupils were also knowledgeable about the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes. By the middle and upper stages, pupils were able to identify the strategies used in problem solving, but now needed more opportunities to apply them independently.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school met the range of pupils' needs well. There was a culture of inclusion and achievement within classes. Staff knew pupils very well. They used a wide range of strategies to meet their needs, including well organised teaching groups, effective use of a wide range of resources and very effective individual support in class for pupils with additional support needs. In a few aspects of language and mathematics, there was still scope for increased challenge for higher attaining pupils to match the emphasis on personal responsibility offered in ICT and the expressive arts. Individualised educational programmes for pupils with additional support needs had involved effective consultation with all staff involved, parents and the relevant pupils. The plans had appropriate learning targets and were helpful in ensuring that pupils' needs were being fully met. Pupils with a Record of Needs were supported very well. The visiting teacher of support for learning worked well with staff, as did classroom and support for learning assistants, to provide effective support for pupils. The school had a clear system for tracking pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics and suitable arrangements for maintaining profiles of pupils' progress from stage to stage in other areas of the curriculum.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	Arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils were very good. Staff had a caring attitude towards pupils, knew them well and were committed to their social and emotional well-being. All staff were trained in child protection procedures and understood clearly the child protection policy and arrangements for its implementation. The welfare of potentially vulnerable children was reviewed continuously. The school's equality policy was clearly understood as fundamental to the school's success. It included appropriate attention to anti-bullying and the promotion of positive behaviour and was regarded by pupils and parents as being effective overall. Staff were clear about protocols for the administration of medicines. Parents were consulted on sensitive issues in relation to health education. There were well planned arrangements for the welcoming of pupils from pre-school provision and for the transfer of P7 pupils to Wallace Hall Academy.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation and facilities was adequate. Classrooms were well lit and furnished and just big enough for current class sizes. There was a good library and ICT area. The hall was used effectively for dining, assemblies and general learning purposes. The school was well equipped with ICT facilities, including electronic whiteboards in each classroom. Weaknesses included the uneven surface of the tarmac playground and the deteriorating condition of the window frames and the perimeter wall. There were appropriate arrangements for entrance security. The education authority had taken suitable steps to facilitate access and provide for people with disabilities.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Relationships between pupils and teachers were very positive. Pupils behaved well and were proud to identify with their school. There was a strong sense of community within the school. Pupil and staff morale was high. Pupils were given a significant degree of responsibility within the school, including involvement in the school improvement plan, the nutrition action group, community and charity involvement and the Eco School initiative. The pupil council played an important and useful role in the life of the school. Older pupils helped younger pupils on a regular basis. Staff had clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. Pupils responded well. Their achievements were acknowledged in a range of appropriate ways, including at assemblies, through the display of their work and collectively through the house system. There was a strong sense of equality and fairness in the school. The equality policy had been very carefully produced with pupils, parents and the community. It played an important part in the promotion of concern for race equality, disability awareness and the rights and responsibilities of pupils. There were regular opportunities for religious observance.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnership with parents and the community was particularly strong. The School Board supported the school very well. The school had made sustained and extensive efforts to involve parents in the life of the school and in the learning of their children. Curriculum workshops had been successfully established. Progress reports were detailed and informative. Parents felt that they were kept very well informed about the school. The school involved parents fully in the establishment of key priorities in the school improvement plan. Parents assisted on a regular basis with school activities. Pupils engaged in a range of community activities including lunches and performances for senior citizens. Members of the community participated in school occasions. Local businesses supported the school well. There were productive links with other schools in the neighbourhood cluster and with a range of agencies that provided additional support for pupils' learning and welfare.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Moniaive Primary School served its pupils and community very well. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning was consistently good. The ethos of the school was positive and inclusive. The extensive efforts made to address the full range of pupils' needs encouraged pupils towards a wide range of achievements. Pupils attained well overall. Those with additional support needs were making steady progress. Staff had worked hard and successfully to involve parents and the community in the life of the school and in decisions about its future development.

The headteacher led the school very well. She had established close teamwork with her staff, productive partnerships with parents and the wider community and a very positive, inclusive ethos within the school. Her commitment to the school and her high degree of professional competence had impacted positively on pupils' confidence and staff morale. Policies and procedures were very well organised. Staff were reflective about their roles and keen to improve their practice through continuous professional development. All teachers engaged in systematic observation of pupils' learning in each other's classes and were well placed to share good practice and suggest priorities for school improvement. The headteacher monitored teachers' planning and pupils' work thoroughly. The standards and quality report was clear and accurate. There was an effective system for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. In consequence, initiatives on reading, mental mathematics and ICT were having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning. Priorities in the school improvement plan were aimed at improving the range and quality of pupils' achievements. The school was very well placed for further continuous improvement.

Main points for action

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 develop the curriculum, taking account of the principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence*;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching and challenge for higher attaining pupils; and
- address health and safety issues referred to in this report.

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. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Lachlan MacCallum
HM Inspector

12 December 2006

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	very good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	good

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Self-evaluation	very 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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children were treated fairly in the school. • Parents' evening and progress reports were informative. • The school had a good reputation in the community. • They felt welcome in the school, were consulted on key decisions and had a clear idea of the school's priorities for improvement. • Staff showed concern for the welfare of their children. • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few expressed concerns about how the school dealt with inappropriate behaviour.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed being at school. • They had a say in how to make the school better. • They felt safe and well looked after. • Teachers encouraged them, expected them to work hard and helped them to improve. • Teachers explained things well and let them know how they were progressing. • They got on well with other pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few expressed concern about bullying and the behaviour of some pupils.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school was well led. • There was good communication between senior managers and staff. • They had good opportunities to be involved in decision making. • Continuous professional development was effective. • There was mutual respect between staff and pupils. • They liked working in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

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