

**Park Place Primary School
Dundee City Council
14 March 2006**

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1. Background

Park Place Primary School was inspected in November and December 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, 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 an area near the centre of Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 187. Thirty-four pupils spoke English as an additional language. Almost half of the teaching staff had been newly-appointed at the beginning of this session. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average, due in part to a small number of pupils taking extended holidays abroad during term time.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' friendly and open manner towards visitors.
- Positive and successful approaches to supporting pupils with English as an additional language.
- Pupils' achievements in music.
- The development of pupils' skills in information and communications technology.

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.

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

Almost half the sample of parents responded to the questionnaire. Those who did were generally pleased with the work of the school. They all felt that staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. Around a third of parents were not clear about the school's priorities for the education of their children. A number would have liked to be given more guidance on how to support their children in their learning. Almost all pupils enjoyed being at school and felt that teachers expected them to work hard. Pupils raised concern over the standard of behaviour in school and almost half believed that the behaviour of pupils was not good. A significant number of pupils raised a concern over bullying in the pupil survey. Teachers were very positive about all aspects of the school's work. Support staff were pleased with almost all aspects but a few would like to be more involved in decision-making processes.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall structure of the curriculum was good. Staff allocated additional time to English language and mathematics lessons to raise pupils' attainment. Pupils at P6 and P7 had the opportunity to learn French, German or Spanish. Visiting specialist teachers of physical education, music and art and design and music instructors made valuable contributions to pupils' experiences. The school had implemented a programme for information and communications technology (ICT) and this was having a positive impact on pupils' skills. Recent developments for the implementation of the science programme had improved pupils' opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in this area. The overall quality of teaching was adequate. In the most effective lessons, teachers were well organised, gave clear explanations and made good use of questioning to reinforce learning. In those classes, teachers provided a range of opportunities for pupils to work together and learn from each other. In the most effective lessons, teachers shared learning intentions, set clear timescales and involved pupils in a varied range of activities. Not all teachers made effective use of assessment information to identify pupils' needs or plan the next steps in learning. The amount and scope of homework was variable. The school was reviewing its practice in relation to homework activities to improve the quality and appropriateness of activities.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was weak. In the most effective classes, pupils were interested and motivated. They listened well and worked without close supervision. They responded well when they were provided with opportunities to work in pairs and groups, for example in group writing activities, computing and mathematical games. However, in the majority of lessons, the level of challenge and choice of activities did not meet the learning needs of all pupils. The pace of learning was often too slow and some pupils had difficulty in remaining on task for extended periods of time. Most pupils were unclear about next steps in learning or what they needed to do to improve. Pupils would benefit from the provision of more challenging work.

At all stages, pupils were confident and friendly. They responded well when discussing aspects of their school experience. Pupils in P7 had good opportunities to carry out a range of responsibilities around the school, including acting as playground helpers, buddying and carrying out monitor duties. Pupils knew about the importance of

healthy eating and P1 pupils were benefiting from participating in a daily tooth brushing scheme. Enterprise activities were being developed in a few classes and pupils were involved in developing a variety of ways of raising funds for a selected charity. P7 pupils had been given the opportunity to develop their personal and social skills through participating in a residential activity. A significant number of pupils were making good progress in learning to play musical instruments. The school choir regularly performed for local residents at a variety of community events and were gaining confidence with each performance.

English language

The quality of attainment in English language was adequate. Most pupils achieved national levels in reading and the majority achieved national levels in writing. Most pupils who experienced difficulties in reading and writing were making appropriate progress, especially those for whom English was an additional language. The majority of pupils were developing appropriate skills in listening and talking. Pupils prepared and gave class talks, for example, as part of their coursework in science. However, the school did not have a systematic approach to assessing pupils' listening and talking skills. Pupils' progress in reading was good. At the early stages, pupils had developed a good awareness and understanding of print and by P3 were reading with confidence. By P7, most were fluent readers and read regularly for pleasure. Overall, pupils made adequate progress in writing. Younger pupils in P2 approached writing confidently and enjoyed being 'dictionary detectives' to support their coursework. By P7, most pupils wrote interesting and often extended, pieces of imaginative writing. However, throughout the school, the majority of pupils did not always write at sufficient length or with appropriate attention to detail.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. In recent years attainment had improved slightly but had dipped significantly at some stages at the end of last session. The majority of pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in key aspects of mathematics. Pupils at P2 achieved these levels earlier than expected. Across the school, pupils had a good understanding of graphs and had made good use of computers to handle information. At almost all stages, pupils were unsure of number bonds and table facts. Pupils at P7 were confident in finding patterns and sequences in number and using percentages. However, overall, skills in oral number work were not sufficiently well developed. At P3, almost all pupils were familiar with telling the time using both analogue and digital clocks. Almost all pupils could identify a range of shapes and discuss their properties. At P4 and beyond, pupils were beginning to identify and apply problem-solving strategies to a variety of situations.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The school's arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils were good. Almost all pupils enjoyed being at school and were safe and secure. However, as part of an anti-bullying initiative, the school should explore the concerns of a minority of pupils about bullying. Staff made good use of the school's appropriate procedures to deal

with pupils' health and safety, including pupil behaviour and administration of medicines. All staff had a clear understanding of their role and responsibility in relation to child protection issues and were due to receive training in the recently-updated education authority policy. The school had implemented a new health education programme which promoted healthy eating habits. The popular school tuck shop, which was operated by the Eating for Health Assistant with help from pupils, incorporated a variety of healthy choices. Throughout the school, pupils engaged in short activity sessions to help them concentrate and encourage fitness.

The school's arrangements to meet pupils' needs were adequate. Most teachers gave helpful support to pupils and took good account of pupils' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the most effective classes, teachers provided a range of tasks and activities which were well matched to pupils' needs. However, across the school many tasks and activities were too paper-based and were not sufficiently challenging. Pupils were not consistently involved in setting targets for their learning. The support for learning teacher was well deployed and contributed very effectively to supporting those pupils who needed extra assistance with their learning. She had developed individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils with additional support needs and she reviewed these on a termly basis. Short-term targets within the IEPs did not always clearly identify timescales for pupils' expected achievements. Together with the education authority, the school was working to improve this aspect. The visiting bilingual support teacher provided very effective support for pupils for whom English was an additional language. The school had appropriate arrangements in place to support pupils as they moved from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation was good. Classrooms were bright and airy with attractive displays of pupils' work. There were ample additional spaces for learning and teaching including a very good ICT room, a library, a pupil support base, a general purpose room, a dining-hall and a gymnasium. The building was not suitable for those with disabilities. Some pupil toilets were in need of repair and the education authority was addressing this. Fluctuating classroom temperatures caused discomfort to pupils and staff.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school provided a welcoming environment for pupils, parents and visitors. Relationships between most teachers and most pupils were positive. In some classes, learning was disrupted at times, by the behaviour of a minority of pupils. The most effective teachers encouraged pupils to behave well, but the school's behaviour policy placed too great an emphasis on the use of sanctions. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour, attainment and achievement were not consistent across all stages and often were too low. The school positively promoted ethnic, cultural and religious diversity through anti-sectarianism projects and culture days. The school had a clear policy on racial equality and appropriate procedures for recording racial incidents. A pupil council had been established and recent activities included road safety and playground improvements. There were few opportunities for pupils to discuss and develop their ideas to enhance the dining room environment and the quality of school lunches.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Parents were kept up to date with school events through regular and informative newsletters. Teachers held two meetings each year to discuss pupil progress. The school had recently invited parents to participate in the development of a new homework policy and had arranged a variety of curriculum workshops. Staff had appropriately consulted with parents on sensitive health issues. The school tried to encourage parents to be involved in learning activities but was not yet fully successful. Staff had developed positive relationships with the School Board. The school participated in, and contributed to, a range of events in the local community.</p>

7. Improving the school

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

Park Place Primary School provided a welcoming environment. Staff were hard-working but the quality of pupils' learning was weak overall and expectations of pupils' attainment were too low. Many pupils were capable of achieving more, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with additional support needs were well supported by staff and were making appropriate progress in their learning. Systems for tracking individual pupil progress were at the early stages of development and had not yet impacted on pupils' attainment.

In her time in post, the headteacher had built positive relationships with the School Board and staff and had gained the confidence of almost all parents. The recently-appointed deputy headteacher provided effective support to the headteacher. However, staff were unsure of the individual line-management and curricular responsibilities of the management team. The headteacher had not yet provided a sufficiently strong lead in learning and teaching and raising attainment. Following a recent effective education authority review, staff had participated in a school audit and been involved in agreeing school priorities for the new development plan. The headteacher and staff now had a clear vision of the future development priorities for the school. There were a number of effective arrangements for self-evaluation. For example, promoted staff tracked pupils' attainment and discussed their progress with class teachers. Forward plans were monitored and professional support visits to classes had begun. However, procedures were not rigorous and did not impact sufficiently on classroom practice or pupils' attainment.

Main points for action

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

- pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics;
- the quality of learning and teaching;
- arrangements for monitoring and self-evaluation to ensure a positive impact on pupils' experiences;
- engaging pupils more in their own learning, setting higher expectations and increasing pace and challenge; and
- establishing a positive climate for independent learning.

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, 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 another report to parents and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Isabel Robb
HM Inspector

14 March 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	good
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	weak
Pupils' attainment in English language	adequate
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate

How well are pupils supported?	
Pastoral care	good
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate

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

Improving the school	
Leadership	adequate
Self-evaluation	adequate

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
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"> • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. • Their children enjoyed being at school. • Their child was treated fairly in school. • Staff made parents feel welcome in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal better with inappropriate behaviour. • Consult more on decisions affecting their child. • Improve information in pupil reports.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped to keep pupils safe and healthy. • Expected pupils to work as hard as they could. • Teachers helped them when they were stuck. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of pupils in the school. • Deal more effectively with bullying. • Let children know how their learning could be improved.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were pleased with almost all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve support staff more in the decision-making process.

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, Wellgate House (Level 5), The Wellgate, Dundee DD1 2DB or by telephoning 01382 224155. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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