

**Slamannan Primary School
Falkirk Council
18 October 2005**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils supported?	4
6. How good is the environment for learning?	5
7. Improving the school	6
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	8
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	9
How can you contact us?	10

1. Background

Slamannan Primary School was inspected in May and June 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 representatives of the Parents and Carers' Association, and a group of parents. There was no School Board.

The school has an enhanced provision class for children with moderate and complex learning difficulties. Pupils who were in this class spent part of their week in the enhanced provision and the remainder of the week in mainstream classes.

The school serves the village of Slamannan and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 126, including 10 pupils from P1 to P4 who attended the enhanced provision. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The quality of pupils' achievements across a range of areas, including health education.
- Pupils' improving attainment in mathematics.
- The recent successful careers event for senior pupils.
- How the headteacher had developed staff teamwork and promoted improvement in the quality of pupils' experiences.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, 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 and carers were satisfied with most aspects of the work of the school. They thought their children were treated fairly in school, that staff made them feel welcome and that the school was well led. A significant minority of parents and carers did not believe the school was good at consulting them on decisions that affected their children. About a quarter of those who responded to the questionnaire thought the school did not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. Pupils reported that the school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy and that teachers explained things clearly. However, a majority of those who responded to the questionnaire felt the behaviour of some pupils was not good. Teaching staff were very positive about all aspects of school life. All support staff said they liked working in the school. However, about half of support staff felt they did not have good opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The quality of the curriculum was good and helped to ensure a broad and balanced experience for pupils. Recent improvements to the curriculum in aspects of mathematics, writing and social subjects had helped to provide pupils with better progression in their learning experiences. Increasingly, pupils had good opportunities to develop appropriate skills in information and communications technology (ICT). Their learning experiences were enhanced by effective contributions from visiting teachers of craft and design and physical education (PE). The school had begun to implement improvements to how younger pupils learned through play. Progress in this area was at an early stage of development. Opportunities for pupils to apply skills developed in aspects of English language across a range of curriculum areas required to be developed further. The quality of teaching was good. Overall, staff gave clear and helpful explanations. Most teachers used an appropriate range of approaches in their teaching. They had introduced a range of strategies to encourage pupils to reflect carefully before they answered questions. These strategies were being used very effectively in some classes. Most teachers used praise to good effect. However, teachers did not always make the purposes of lessons clear to pupils, nor did they summarise with pupils what they had learned. In the enhanced provision, the range of teaching approaches did not always take account of the learning needs of a few pupils. Staff across the school used homework effectively to support learning.

The quality of the learning opportunities provided for pupils was good. Most pupils were very attentive to adults and concentrated well on tasks. When they were actively engaged in their learning, such as in using a board game to consolidate skills in number in P2/3, pupils were very attentive and focused. Pupils in P1/2 responded positively to the range of activities provided in the recently developed 'structured play' room. During a health education lesson, pupils in P5 organised themselves well into small groups as part of discussion work. Pupils were able to report back clearly to the teacher on their findings. During craft and design and PE lessons, pupils also applied themselves very well and worked independently. Overall, however, they did not have consistent opportunities to work together in their learning, or to learn from each other. Pupils were starting to review their own progress through use of shared learning targets.

Pupils at a range of stages had produced pieces of high quality art and craft work. At all stages, pupils had responded positively to a strong emphasis on healthy living. Most pupils at P6 and P7 were developing a good knowledge of the dangers of drugs misuse. Older pupils were making good progress in learning French and, for example, at P6 were able to greet others confidently. Senior pupils undertook a range of responsibilities, including assisting younger pupils in the school's 'golden café' and in the playground. They had developed important skills in enterprise education through, for example, their charity work for 'Red Nose' day. Elected representatives from P4 to P7 made positive contributions to the life of the school through involvement in the pupil council. As a direct result of their suggestions, the school had provided a bicycle rack to encourage and support those pupils who cycled to school. In preparation for transition to secondary school, pupils at P7 had enjoyed taking part in a residential experience with other cluster schools aimed at promoting self-esteem and building confidence. As part of personal learning planning, pupils maintained a record of their achievements in a range of areas, including how they had achieved in sports and competitions.

English language

Overall, the quality of pupils' attainment in English language was fair. In recent years, the school had made steady progress in raising attainment in writing. However, progress in raising attainment in reading had been limited. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in writing. A majority were doing so in listening, talking and reading. Pupils who did not attain expected national levels and who required additional support in their learning were, overall, making good progress. At most stages, pupils listened well in whole class lessons and to instructions from adults. A small minority found listening to others difficult. Across the stages, most pupils expressed themselves clearly. A few at some stages found difficulty in expressing their views confidently. Most pupils read fluently and, overall, with good understanding. At some stages, pupils did not have a clear understanding of how writers achieve their effects. Pupils across the school wrote effectively in a variety of styles and for a variety of purposes. Standards of handwriting, presentation and spelling were good.

Mathematics

The quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Levels of attainment had risen steadily in recent years. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. With support from staff, pupils for whom some aspects of mathematics were difficult were making good progress. In information handling, across the stages, pupils were able to interpret and discuss issues arising from a range of graphs appropriate to their stage. At all stages, most pupils were developing good skills in written and mental calculation. By P3, pupils were confident in giving change using coins. Pupils at P7 approached number work very confidently. Their skills in written and mental computation, including use of money and aspects of time, were good. At some stages, however, a few pupils were not sufficiently skilled in using a range of strategies to calculate flexibly and quickly. At both P3 and P7, pupils were able to identify and discuss appropriate shapes and interpret directions for a route confidently. By P7, most pupils were confident and motivated when undertaking problem solving activities and were developing a good understanding of the range of strategies from which they could select.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The school provided good quality pastoral support for pupils. Staff knew pupils well as individuals and were attentive to their care and welfare. Relevant staff were appropriately trained in areas such as first aid. Almost all staff had undergone appropriate child protection training. The school placed a strong and effective emphasis on health education, including ensuring that pupils were aware of the dangers of misuse of drugs. Plans were in place to ensure more consistent whole-school approaches to pupils' personal and social development.

In English language and mathematics in particular, teachers ensured that tasks and activities were at a level appropriate to pupils' learning needs. Staff made good use of clear and effective procedures to identify pupils who required additional support in their learning. The part-time learning support teacher provided good direct assistance to groups of pupils who needed further help. Working with teachers, she also provided support for a broader range of learning needs within classrooms. However, support in classes was not always sufficiently well coordinated to ensure maximum benefit to pupils. A range of support staff provided good individual assistance for pupils. Staff made effective use of well planned learning targets within individualised educational programmes to help promote and monitor pupils' progress. Most pupils, including those in the enhanced provision, were making good progress in achieving the learning targets set for them. In the enhanced provision, a few pupils were not sufficiently challenged in their learning in mathematics. Staff across the school had developed effective links with a range of agencies, including psychological services, occupational therapy and the visiting service for traveller pupils. As part of an initiative to help senior pupils understand the purpose of education and the need for appropriate qualifications, staff had organised a highly successful careers event for pupils at P6 and P7. This had encouraged pupils to reflect on different occupations and careers and to determine the skills and qualifications required to pursue these careers. Links with pre-school provision and Braes High School were effective.

The quality of support for the learning needs of pupils in the enhanced provision had some strengths, including good support for pupils from special needs auxiliaries and classroom assistants. However, the inclusion of pupils from the enhanced provision in mainstream classes, and procedures for tracking their progress when there, were not always carefully planned. No pupils in the enhanced provision had a Record of Needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
<p>Quality of accommodation and facilities</p>	<p>The quality of the accommodation was very good. The environment for pupils and staff was bright and attractive. Teachers made flexible and effective use of the spacious accommodation to meet the needs of pupils. They also made good use of additional teaching areas for a variety of curricular activities. Pupils had regular access to the well-resourced ICT suite and the school library. Access for disabled users was suitable. Security was well managed and appropriate. Plans were in place to improve the playground area to provide a more attractive and stimulating environment for pupils.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>The atmosphere in the school was welcoming. Relationships between teachers and pupils were good, overall. The morale of teaching staff was high. Morale amongst support staff was not consistently high. Most pupils responded well to approaches used by staff to encourage positive behaviour. Expectations of pupils' involvement in their learning were not yet consistently high enough. There were effective arrangements for religious observance, including a carefully planned programme of assemblies. These, along with other approaches, were used effectively to celebrate pupils' achievements. Staff training in race equality policy and procedures was being implemented.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school's partnerships with parents and the local community were good, overall. Monthly newsletters helped keep parents informed of school events. Parents were welcomed to assemblies and school concerts and had supported the school's recent, successful 'Book Week'. Personal learning plans were shared with parents and were used by staff as an agenda for meetings with parents to discuss pupils' progress. In the enhanced provision, parents were informed of their child's progress through an annual review and progress report. Staff in the enhanced provision also made good use of home-school diaries to support communication with parents. However, overall, across the school, approaches to encourage parents to actively support their children's learning were too limited. There was no School Board. An active Parents and Carers' Association supported the school through a range of fund-raising events. The active schools' coordinator had helped to establish after-school clubs for some pupils and had been involved in planning improvements to the school playground.

7. Improving the school

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

Overall, Slamannan Primary School provided a good and improving standard of education for its pupils. Staff provided a supportive environment for pupils. Most pupils were achieving well across a range of areas. The quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics and in writing was improving. Levels of attainment in listening, talking and reading were, however, too low. Improvements to the curriculum and aspects of learning and teaching had begun to help staff to address learning needs more effectively. How staff across the school addressed the learning needs of pupils in the enhanced provision required further improvement.

The headteacher, who had been in post for two years, provided good leadership. She had gained the confidence of parents and staff, and involved them in identifying and addressing priorities for improvement. Working closely with staff, she had ensured improvements in aspects of learning and teaching and in important areas of the curriculum. In mathematics, improvements in how staff used the school's programme had led to a clearer focus on learning outcomes for pupils. However, the pace of change in addressing, for example, attainment in reading was too slow. The principal teacher had been in post for 18 months. She gave good support to the headteacher and carried out her remit effectively. The headteacher had established good procedures to monitor aspects of provision. She provided constructive feedback to all staff on forward plans and had introduced measures to assist staff to monitor and track pupils' progress. Regular and effective monitoring of the progress of pupils in the enhanced provision was not yet established. Overall, the school was now well placed, with the support of the education authority, to further improve the

quality of pupils' learning experiences and, in particular, levels of attainment in aspects of English language.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve aspects of learning and teaching. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- raise attainment in listening, talking and reading;
- ensure that developing good practice in learning and teaching is shared and consistent throughout the school;
- implement planned improvements to whole-school approaches to personal and social development and positive behaviour management; and
- review and improve how staff address the learning needs of pupils in the enhanced provision, both in class and in the mainstream setting.

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.

Peter McNaughton
HM Inspector

18 October 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Accommodation and facilities

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents and the community
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be fair

- Pupils' attainment in English language

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.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child enjoyed school. • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • Parents' evenings were helpful and informative. • School buildings were kept in good order. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant minority of parents thought that the school did not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. • A similar proportion felt that the school was not good at consulting parents on decisions that affected their child.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly, told them when they had done something well, and expected them to work as hard as they could. • The school helped them to keep safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all pupils were treated fairly in the school. • The behaviour of some pupils was not good.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. • Support staff were very positive about some aspects of school life, including that they liked working in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About a half of support staff felt that they did not have good opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process. • Almost two-thirds of support staff believed that their training time was not used effectively.

How can you contact us?

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