

**St Patrick's Primary School
Dumbarton
West Dunbartonshire Council
3 June 2008**

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1. Background

St Patrick's Primary School was inspected in February 2008 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 and the parish priest. The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

St Patrick's Primary School is a denominational school serving the Silverton area of Dumbarton. At the time of the inspection the roll was 329. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. At the time of the inspection, as part of a national initiative, all pupils in P1 to P3 received a free school meal. Pupils' attendance was above the national average. The school had been accredited by the local authority as a Health Promoting School and had gained a Silver Eco-Schools Scotland award.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Polite, motivated and well behaved pupils who were proud of their school and eager participants in their own learning.
- Contribution made by pupils to the life of the school.
- High quality pastoral care by staff and inclusive approaches to meeting additional support needs.
- Success of staff in involving parents, carers and families in their children's learning.

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.

Just over a third of parents responded to the questionnaire. Parents thought that staff showed care and concern for their child and that school buildings were kept in good order. All pupils thought that teachers expected them to work hard. Almost all pupils thought that teachers explained things clearly and helped them when they were having difficulties with their work. They thought that the school helped them keep themselves safe and healthy. All teachers and support staff were positive about all aspects of the school. Staff thought that they benefited from the staff development programme and opportunities to spend time working with their stage partners. Catering staff felt very well included in school life.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was suitably broad and pupils benefited from the range of subjects available. They participated enthusiastically in music, drama and the recently introduced financial education which included good use of real life examples. Across the school, teachers and pupils were making increased effective use of information and communications technology (ICT). At P6, they were beginning to develop their French speaking skills. Teachers had made a very effective start to developing cross-curricular work in line with national guidance. Pupils had benefitted from a whole school project on Malawi which had creatively combined environmental studies, art and design, music and drama. Teachers were at the early stages of successfully developing pupils' literacy and numeracy through other areas of the curriculum. Pupils at P6 had been stimulated by a project called "Clyde in the Classroom". They had gained much from a visit to the Glasgow Science Centre where they learned about animals in the River Clyde. They were carefully monitoring a large number of brown trout to ensure that they developed enough to release them back into the river. The school gave a high priority to health education, including ensuring that pupils participated in two hours of physical education each week, in line with national recommendations. Pupils were knowledgeable about a healthy diet. Across the school, teachers relied too often on commercially produced courses and programmes of work. The overall quality of teaching for effective learning was good, with teaching in the lessons observed ranging from very good to weak. Most teachers were well organised and planned their lessons well. They gave clear explanations and instructions. In the best lessons, teachers shared with pupils what they expected them to learn and gave them very effective feedback on what they could do to improve. They questioned pupils well to develop their thinking. Pupils benefited when more practical approaches were used, for example to teach mathematics. However, across the school, these strong features were not consistent across classes and too many lessons were over-directed by the teacher. These lessons did not promote pupils' development as active learners. The school now needed to extend the best practices across all stages and lessons.

Teachers worked hard to establish a positive learning environment. Pupils were enthusiastic and confident learners. They were hard working and were very well behaved, even when lessons lacked excitement and stimulation. They were eager to please their teachers. Pupils worked together well in pairs and groups and they willingly took responsibility for aspects of their own learning. Across the school, pupils developed as increasingly skilful learners. Pupils felt successful in their learning.

The school took very good steps to develop pupils' wider achievements. The eco committee contributed to the monthly newsletter to parents. Other committees, such as the pupil council and that for fair trade, allowed pupils to influence important aspects of school life. Pupils raised significant sums of money for charities such as the Yorkhill heart unit and Children's Hospice Association Scotland which helped them gain an understanding of the needs of others. At P7, pupils gained important skills in citizenship through acting as play leaders, wet weather monitors and buddies to younger pupils. At P5, pupils demonstrated confidence when singing, speaking and acting at an assembly to highlight friendship. The focus on Malawi had increased pupils' awareness and understanding of what it meant to be a global citizen. Residential experiences helped to effectively develop pupils' personal and social skills.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. In recent years pupils' attainment in reading had remained consistently high, with attainment in writing showing clear signs of improvement. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in reading and writing. Across the stages, a few were attaining these earlier than might normally have been expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making steady progress. Steps had been taken to meet more effectively the needs of higher achieving pupils. Across the school, almost all pupils listened very well to one another and to adults. Almost all could express themselves with confidence. Pupils at P6 and P7 had prepared talks to deliver to their peers on their topics, including World War 2 and the Victorians. At the early and middle stages, pupils contributed well to small group and class discussions. Across the stages, pupils could read very well for a variety of purposes with knowledge and understanding and could describe the key features of a book. Pupils were able to write for a variety of purposes. Pupils showed a good understanding of punctuation and grammar. Presentation of pupils' work across the school was too variable.

Mathematics

Overall, pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good, despite a slight decline in the previous three years. Almost all pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment. Pupils at the early stages gained these levels earlier than might normally be expected. However, these early gains were not always sustained as pupils moved to later stages. Pupils with additional support needs were making appropriate progress. Pupils could use ICT well to design spreadsheets to handle information and draw bar graphs. They were less confident when extracting information from graphs. Most pupils in the early stages were confident when using numbers and money. At all stages, pupils were skilful when carrying out mental calculations. In particular they were skilled when converting between fractions, decimals and percentages. Across the school, pupils could successfully recognise a range of shapes and talk about their properties. At all stages, pupils were very well motivated when solving challenging problems using a range of strategies.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Overall, the quality of meeting learning needs was good. In classes, teachers did not always ensure that tasks and activities were sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to maximise their progress. In a few lessons the pace of learning was too slow. Pupils' additional support needs were successfully identified, assessed and provided for by the school and education authority. Network support staff identified the additional support needs of pupils very well and provided teachers with useful information on their needs. The use of individualised educational programmes (IEPs) was well judged and pupils were making good progress with good long- and short-term learning targets in their IEPs. A few targets for personal and social development required further development. Pupils with dyslexic difficulties followed programmes which met their needs effectively. The network support teacher worked very well with pupils in tutorial sessions. She made a valuable contribution to supporting pupils across the school and her work was a model of good practice. Support assistants provided very good support to pupils. The school's links with special schools and units helped it to provide an inclusive environment and ensured the good progress of pupils with additional support needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

| Aspect | Comment |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Care, welfare and development | Care, welfare and development was very good. Staff gave a very high priority to the care and welfare of their pupils. They were alert to their social, emotional, physical and health needs. All staff were trained in child protection. Pupils were confident about approaching members of staff with any concerns that they might have. Health promotion was embedded into the culture of the school. Catering staff willingly spent time with individual children to encourage them to make healthy food choices. Pupils enjoyed the opportunities catering staff provided to allow them to taste unfamiliar food. Transitions from pre-school into P1 were well planned, including very effective planning arrangements to meet the needs of prospective pupils. Transfer arrangements to Our Lady and St Patrick's High School were well managed. Staff from the secondary school visited and taught P7 classes, for example, in science and technology. Pupils in P6 and P7, working with a member of staff had written and directed a very successful school show called "Moving On Up", about the transition to secondary. |

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| <p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p> | <p>Overall, the management and use of resources and available space for learning was very good. Teaching areas were large and well equipped. The majority of classrooms had effective displays of pupils' work. The school should review the use of communal areas for active learning. The school building was well cared for and kept clean. The school had a separate ICT suite which had recently been upgraded and all classrooms were fitted with interactive whiteboards. Pupils did not store their computer work effectively. There was appropriate access to all parts of the school buildings by users with restricted mobility. Building security arrangements were appropriate.</p> |
| <p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p> | <p>The school had a very happy and relaxed atmosphere, with a very strong Catholic ethos. The parish priest visited classes twice a week. Pupils were very well prepared for the Sacraments. Staff had very good relationships with their pupils and their teamwork was evident throughout the school. Staff set high standards for pupil behaviour. However, a few teachers did not have sufficiently high enough expectations of pupils' attainment and standards of presentation of pupils' work were too variable. Before breaks and lunch, some classes finished earlier than was necessary. Pupils identified strongly with their school and were proud of it. All pupils wore school uniform. Pupils' successes were valued and celebrated very well at weekly assemblies and on a wall of achievement. Assemblies provided very good opportunities for regular religious observance. Pupils on shared placements were successfully included in the life of the school. The school actively promoted anti-sectarianism in partnerships with neighbouring primary schools and celebrated feast days. The school promoted diversity through blues music and references to the cultural divide around New Orleans. However, overall, approaches to celebrating racial equality were limited.</p> |

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| The school's success in involving parents, carers and families | <p>The school had developed very good links with parents. It was very well supported by the Parent Council and the PTA who donated significant sums of money to the school funds. Parents enjoyed sharing assemblies with pupils. They willingly gave up time to assist with school trips. Parents of pupils in P1 were invited to have lunch with their child as part of their induction programme. Almost all parents attended parents' evenings and indicated that they found them helpful. Parents valued reports on their children. Termly curricular newsletters provided parents with a very good knowledge of the work being covered at each stage. The headteacher ensured that parents were well informed about sensitive aspects of health education. The school handbook was an example of best practice. The school was further increasing the involvement of parents in their child's learning through a personal learning planning initiative. Members of the community supported the school through their involvement in the Malawi project, paired reading and assisting pupils to make bird boxes.</p> |

7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Patrick's Primary school provided a good quality of education for pupils. There was a strong Catholic ethos which fostered caring and a positive learning environment. It had a very good reputation within the local community. Pupils were articulate and mature young people with positive attitudes towards their learning. They benefited from a range of out-of-school activities and visits, including residential experiences for pupils. Their behaviour was very good. Staff worked very well together and provided a high quality of pastoral care. They worked well with specialist staff to meet effectively the pupils' additional support needs. However, teaching for effective learning could be further improved through increased consistency across all stages. Attainment in English language and mathematics was very good.

The headteacher was highly respected by parents, staff and pupils. She was highly visible around the school. She knew the pupils and staff well. She had developed a strong sense of teamwork within staff. She had a very good understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs. She had established very strong links with parents. The headteacher was supported by two deputy headteachers. One deputy headteacher worked well with the network support teacher and had successfully managed improvements to support for pupils across the school. She supported staff at the early stages and promoted helpful discussions between staff at these stages. The other deputy headteacher monitored P4–P7 pupil's behaviour and had assisted staff to take

forward developments in ICT. A principal teacher from network support had led significant improvements to quality of support for pupils with additional support needs. All teachers willingly took responsibility for developing a curricular area. They felt that they had good opportunities to be involved in decision making. The headteacher and deputy headteachers monitored teachers' plans and sampled pupils work regularly. The headteacher visited classes to review learning and teaching. The headteacher met with staff termly to review pupils' progress towards agreed learning targets. Overall, these strategies were effective, but did not challenge teachers sufficiently to make greater improvements in teaching for effective learning. Neither deputy headteacher had a sufficiently active role in school improvement, nor did they have a significant role in ensuring consistency across the school in learning and teaching. Staff were not clear about improvement through rigorous and systematic self-evaluation. Self-evaluation could be used more effectively to evaluate progress in implementing new initiatives or improving outcomes for learners. Overall, there was a need to have a stronger focus on learning and teaching as keys to school improvement. With continued support from the education authority, the headteacher was well placed to continue to build the school's capacity to improve.

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:

- increase staff expectations of pace, challenge and quality of pupil's work;
- continue to develop leadership at all levels; and
- further develop self-evaluation to ensure improvement, in particular in teaching for effective 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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Elizabeth Morrison
HM Inspector

3 June 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? | |
|---|-----------|
| The curriculum | very good |
| Teaching for effective learning | good |
| Learners' experiences | very good |
| Improvement in performance: English language | very good |
| Improvement in performance: mathematics | very good |

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

| How good is the environment for learning? | |
|--|-----------|
| Care, welfare and development | very good |
| Management and use of resources and space for learning | very good |
| The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school | good |
| Expectations and promoting achievement | good |
| Equality and fairness | good |
| The school's success in involving parents, carers and families | very good |

| Leading and improving the school | |
|---|----------|
| Developing people and partnerships | good |
| Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher) | good |
| Leadership of improvement and change (across the school) | adequate |
| Improvement through self-evaluation | adequate |

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 child enjoyed school. • The school had a good reputation in the community. • School reports gave them helpful information and parents' evenings were informative. • Their child was treated fairly. • There was mutual respect between staff and pupils. • Teachers set high standards for attainment. • The school was well led. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers had no significant issues of concern. |
| What pupils thought the school did well | What pupils think the school could do better |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers checked their homework and told them when they had done something well. • Teachers were good at letting them know how they were getting on with their learning. • They enjoyed school and got on well with other pupils. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fifth of pupils thought that the behaviour of other pupils could be better. |
| What staff thought the school did well | What staff think the school could do better |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff were positive about all aspects of the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues. |

Appendix 3 Good practice

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

Partnership with network support to address pupils' additional support needs

The network support teacher played a key role in ensuring that pupils with additional support needs were well supported and challenged to meet their full potential. She had built up effective working partnerships with staff across the school. They collaborated successfully to identify, assess and make good provision for all children with additional support needs. As a result, the school offered a strong supportive and inclusive environment for learning.

Where necessary, other specialist staff such as the educational psychologist worked with teachers and the network support teacher to help identify and address the additional support needs of all pupils. The network support teacher made good use of the education authority's screening tests to identify levels of need at an early stage. She informed all staff of the additional needs of pupils through an additional support needs register. This register gave an overview of additional support needs for each class and also provided the headteacher with an effective overview of individual pupils' needs and progress. As a result, staff were aware of the specific nature of the additional support needs of any pupil and the level of staged intervention operating to meet their needs. Specialised resources required to support individual pupils or group of pupils were also identified. The school had made good use of barriers to learning as identified within the national code of practice, *Supporting Children's Learning*. Pupils whose additional support needs arose from factors linked to family circumstances were referred promptly to the headteacher for further investigation and support. Staff were kept well informed through the regular issue of in-school additional support needs newsletters.

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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