

**Allan's Primary School and
Nursery Class
Stirling Council**

16 October 2001

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Allan's Primary School and Nursery Class Stirling Council

1. Introduction

Allan's Primary School and its nursery class were inspected in June 2001 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, mathematics, and art and design within the expressive arts.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents. Members of the inspection team also met the Chairperson and members of the School Board, representatives of the parent teacher association (PTA), a group of parents, and the Pupil Council.

2. The school

The school serves the areas of Top of the Town and King's Park in Stirling. At the time of the inspection the roll was 261, including 43 children in the nursery class.

Parents' views

Half of the sample of parents in both the nursery class and school responded to the questionnaire. They were very satisfied with the work of the school and the nursery class.

- All thought that their children enjoyed being at school, that teachers dealt effectively with bad behaviour and the school was well led.

Almost all thought that:

- their children were encouraged to work to the best of their ability, were known as individuals and helped if in difficulty;
- pupils were treated fairly by teachers; and
- any concerns were dealt with effectively and the school had a good reputation in the community.

Most felt that:

- meetings with teachers were useful and staff were good at explaining their work.

About a quarter of parents who responded wanted more information about their child's progress and about their strengths and weaknesses. A third of the parents of primary school children and half of nursery parents expressed concerns about the accommodation.

Ethos

The school had a very good ethos. All members of the school community were valued highly and treated with respect and care. Pupils were polite, helpful and generally well behaved. Staff teamwork was very good and their morale was high. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Staff used praise effectively to encourage effort. Pupils took pride in the achievements of the school and of other pupils. The elected Pupil Council enabled pupils to participate

effectively in making decisions about the life and work of the school. A very well-organised buddy system encouraged very supportive and caring relationships between senior and infant pupils. Regular assemblies provided very good opportunities to celebrate achievements and for religious observance. Pupil attendance was in line with the national average.

School and community

The school had established very good relationships with parents, other schools and educational support services.

- The School Board provided very good support for the school.
- The parent teacher association (PTA) and parents gave very generous assistance. They worked closely with staff by acting as helpers in the school, raising funds, helping with outings and taking after-school clubs.
- Communication with parents was very good. Parents' evenings, curriculum workshops and regular, well-presented newsletters kept parents well informed about school activities and about opportunities for them to become involved in the work of the school. Annual written reports were clear and detailed.
- Links with the new community schools executive group were very good.
- Liaison with the associated secondary school was very good.
- Staff from the health board, the police and social work provided very good support.

Accommodation

The school's accommodation was good overall. However, some of the classroom bays were cramped and space generally was limited. The building was warm, clean and well maintained. Security systems were in

place and used well. Play areas for the school and nursery class were small but were suitably organised to allow energetic and quiet play. The school was addressing a number of traffic management and road safety issues.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed. Visiting teachers of support for learning, art and design, music and physical education, and instrumental tutors taught regularly in the school. Non-teaching staff contributed very well to the life and work of the school and provided very good support for staff and pupils.

Resource provision in the nursery class, and for English language, mathematics and art and design was good. In information and communications technology (ICT), hardware and software provision was good.

The headteacher managed the school's devolved budget very effectively to support staff development, enhance resource provision and to improve aspects of the accommodation.

3. How well are pupils performing?

Nursery

In the nursery, children were making good progress in each of the key areas of their development and learning. They had settled well into familiar nursery routines, and were gaining in confidence and becoming increasingly independent. They enjoyed and listened attentively to stories, knew simple number rhymes and were learning about the world around them.

English language

In the primary school, the overall quality of attainment in English language was fair. Most pupils coped well with their classwork but for some this needed to be more demanding. Pupils at P1 and P2 were making a very good start to developing their early literacy skills. At P3,

all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in *listening* and *talking*, almost all in *reading* and most in *writing*. At P7, half were attaining national standards in *reading* and fewer than half in *listening*, *talking* and *writing*. A significant number of pupils across the school were achieving beyond these levels and many at the later stages had made notable progress. Most pupils listened attentively in class and were able to express their views and opinions clearly but needed to develop further their skills in small group discussion. Many pupils were enthusiastic readers of fiction. They made use of reference materials but needed more experience of finding and collating information from a range of sources. In writing, some pupils wrote well and at length but most needed to improve the overall planning and structure of their work. Standards of handwriting, spelling and the presentation of written work were variable.

Mathematics

In mathematics, the overall quality of attainment was fair. Most pupils performed well in their coursework. At P1 and P2 most pupils were making very good progress in developing their early numeracy skills. At P3, all pupils were achieving appropriate national standards in *information handling*, *number*, *money and measurement*, and *shape, position and movement*. At P7, half were attaining appropriate national standards. At all stages, however, a significant number of pupils were attaining beyond the levels expected for their age. In *information handling*, most pupils at P7 could interpret graphs but were less skilled in using the computer to produce graphs, databases and spreadsheets. In *number, money and measurement*, pupils were developing good skills in mental calculation. Most pupils had a good knowledge of basic number facts but some were not consistently secure in their recall of number bonds. In *shape, position and movement* most pupils could identify 2- and 3- dimensional shapes and describe some of their properties. In *problem solving and enquiry*, pupils' skills

in discussing, selecting and using a range of strategies needed to be developed further.

Art and Design

Overall pupils' attainment in art and design was good. At all stages pupils were developing appropriate skills in basic drawing, painting and modelling and were attaining good standards. Some pupils at P2 had produced very good drawings of local buildings and at P7 some had achieved an exceptionally high standard in water colour paintings of flowers. Most pupils were able to express their personal ideas and feelings effectively in pictures, prints and models. Many pupils also achieved good standards in design. However, they needed to develop further their skills in evaluating and appreciating their own work and that of artists and designers from their own and other cultures.

Information and communications technology

The following were notable features of pupils' proficiency in information and communications technology (ICT).

- Across the school pupils were learning to use graphics and word processing programs and to access files and menus.
- Pupils in P5, P6 and P7 tutored staff and pupils in the use of a computer training program.
- Classes made regular use of the scanner and digital camera.
- Pupils in P7 had designed and uploaded the school's web site.
- All pupils were able to access and send e-mail.
- The computer club provided very good opportunities for pupils to develop further their skills in ICT.

Staff had prepared and implemented effectively a very good programme for the systematic development of pupils' skills in ICT.

4. How good is the curriculum?

Pupils received a broad and well balanced curriculum. It covered all aspects set out in national advice and had a clear focus on pupils' personal and social development. Pupils learned French from P4 onwards.

Nursery

The nursery curriculum was broad and took full account of each of the key areas of children's development and learning. The programmes in emotional, personal and social development and communication and language were very good. The programmes for expressive and aesthetic development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development and movement were good. The outdoor play area provided only limited scope for children to take part in energetic play. Staff planned a broad range of stimulating activities and organised the daily programme well.

English language

The programme for English language was fair. It provided balanced coverage of most aspects of listening, talking, reading and writing and gave very good attention to the development of pupils' skills in early literacy. The school recognised the need for clearer guidance to ensure the appropriate progression of pupils' language skills after the early stages. Pupils needed more stimulating opportunities to use and develop further their skills in listening and talking. Teachers needed to develop a more structured approach to improving pupils' skills in writing and to developing further their skills in finding and using information from a range of sources.

Mathematics

In mathematics, the programme was good overall. It provided suitably balanced coverage of most aspects of information handling, number, money and measurement and shape, position and movement. Pupils had good

opportunities to improve their skills in mental calculation but some needed more opportunities to learn strategies for calculation and to reinforce their knowledge of number bonds. Staff needed to provide a wider range of activities for pupils to develop further their skills in practical measurement and to apply their mathematical knowledge in real life situations. Pupils needed more experience of problem solving and enquiry and of using the computer for information handling.

Art and Design

The overall quality of the programme in art and design was good. It provided very good opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills in a wide range of media and to extend their expressive and design skills. At P7, very good opportunities had been introduced for pupils to evaluate and appreciate the outcomes of their own work and those of well-known artists, architects and designers. At all other stages, provision for the development of pupils' evaluation and appreciation skills should now be developed more consistently in line with this good practice.

Expressive Arts

Overall, the programme for expressive arts was good. It provided for appropriate coverage of most aspects of art and design, drama, music and physical education. However, teachers' planning indicated that, at most stages, provision for the development of pupils' evaluation and appreciation skills was given insufficient attention.

5. How good is learning and teaching?

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. More than a third of the lessons were very good. Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

In the nursery class, staff knew the children well as individuals and interacted effectively with them to extend their interests and develop their learning. There was a good balance of free play and more structured activity. Staff needed to develop further their procedures for observing and recording children's progress.

In the primary classes, teachers prepared for lessons carefully and were well organised.

- Teachers gave clear instructions and explanations and made good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding. Praise was used appropriately to motivate pupils.
- Most pupils were hardworking and well motivated. Many would benefit from working more co-operatively and taking more responsibility for their own learning.
- Most pupils were given tasks which were suited to their needs. However, to improve levels of attainment from P4 to P7 some pupils required more stimulating and challenging activities and a quicker pace of learning.
- Teachers knew their pupils well. They assessed and recorded progress carefully and made use of national tests to confirm their judgements. Promoted staff should monitor assessment information more carefully, particularly in writing, to ensure the accuracy of levels of attainment.
- Homework was set regularly and marked but needed to be more varied and stimulating.

6. How well are pupils supported?

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| Care and welfare | Teaching and non-teaching staff provided very high levels of care for pupils and ensured that their needs were met sensitively and effectively. They had created a very caring and supportive environment and knew pupils and their families well. An effective child protection policy was in place and used appropriately. |
| Personal and social development | The school successfully promoted very good relationships and positive behaviour. In the nursery class, staff provided very good support for children's emotional, personal and social development. They gave very good attention to developing children's self esteem and encouraged them to be considerate of one another. In the primary classes, the programme was very good. Staff promoted pupils' personal and social development through a range of classroom and extra-curricular activities. The house system was used effectively to promote good behaviour and effort. The health education programme was good and gave appropriate attention to education about drugs and personal relationships, with the appropriate involvement of parents. |
| Support for learning | Arrangements to support pupils who needed additional help with their learning were very good. The visiting teachers of support for learning worked effectively with small groups or taught alongside teachers in classrooms. They consulted regularly with staff to assess and plan how to meet the needs of individual pupils. They advised teachers on meeting individual needs and helped to prepare appropriate individualised educational programmes for pupils with learning difficulties. Additionally, very good support was provided for pupils with social and emotional difficulties. Support for Learning Assistants provided very good support for pupils. |

7. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher provided very good leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school. She had successfully established very good relationships with staff, pupils and parents and created a caring and inclusive environment for pupils. She had promoted effective team-work amongst all staff. Her concern for equality and fairness in the experience of all pupils had been the basis of a range of successful school initiatives, most notably the successful implementation of programmes to support early intervention and pupils' personal and social development.

The depute headteacher provided very good support for the headteacher, staff and pupils. Her remit was appropriate and included responsibility for the nursery class and early stages. She had led a range of planned whole-school curriculum developments successfully and thoughtfully.

The two senior teachers were very hardworking and fulfilled their remits well. Remits were agreed annually, but now need to take greater account of their strengths to provide more focussed support for teachers.

The school's aims were comprehensive and appropriate and provided a very good basis for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its work. Teachers received helpful advice about most areas of the curriculum but guidance about English language and aspects of mathematics needed to be improved.

Staff development and review

Staff development was planned carefully and matched well to the needs of individual teachers and the school development plan. Teachers made good use of education authority staff development courses and of school, or cluster based, training. The process of staff review was in place and used effectively.

School development planning

The school's development plan set out appropriate priorities, tasks, timescales and success criteria. It was recognised by staff as being ambitious but very good progress was being made with its implementation.

Approaches to improving quality

The headteacher and depute headteacher undertook a programme of monitoring and evaluation which covered all aspects of the work of the school. Staff participated well in the process. The headteacher and depute headteacher monitored forward plans through discussions with teachers and provided written comment. They sampled pupils' work, visited classrooms and provided feedback to staff on key performance indicators, and tracked the attainment of pupils. They now needed to focus more directly on patterns of attainment achieved at the middle and upper stages to ensure an increased rate of progress for all pupils. The headteacher had provided a useful standards and quality report for parents. This was a commendable first step. Future reports needed to be more rigorous in evaluating the quality of the school's provision.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided a good standard of education for its pupils. The headteacher and staff were committed to improving further the quality of learning and teaching and to raising attainment. Pupils were valued as individuals and encouraged to learn in an environment based on fairness and equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school is well placed to build on its many strengths and develop further the quality of its provision.

Key strengths

- Effective leadership of the headteacher, and very good support from the depute headteacher.
- The commitment of a very hardworking staff team.

- The very good ethos, the high level of care for pupils, and the opportunities provided to enhance pupils' personal and social development.
- The broad curriculum including the successful policy for the development of ICT.
- The very good arrangements for support for learning.
- Very good communication with parents and the support provided by the school board, the PTA and parents.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- Aspects of the programmes in English language and mathematics should be improved in line with this report to establish appropriate progression for all pupils.
- Staff should make more effective use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress.
- The headteacher should ensure that the remits and deployment of the senior teachers make more effective use of their strengths and provide more focused support for teachers.
- The management team should use information from the existing monitoring procedures more effectively to focus directly on increasing the pace of learning for pupils at the middle and upper stages.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations. The school and education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main points for action in the report and to share that plan with parents.

Christine Roebuck
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Eastern Division

16 October 2001

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- The school's ethos
- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- Provision of staff
- The school's management of devolved finances
- The structure of the curriculum
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- The school development plan
- Implementing the school development plan
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *good*

- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Provision of materials and equipment
- Quality of courses or programmes
- Quality of teachers' planning
- Quality of the teaching process
- Quality of pupils' learning
- Matching the teaching process to pupils' needs and experience
- Using assessment to guide the teaching process
- Effectiveness of promoted staff and senior teachers
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work

We judged the following to be *fair*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Quality of lessons observed

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 37% of cases, good in 51% and fair in 12%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

How can you contact us?

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 the office at the address below or by telephoning 0131 244 8079. Copies are also available on our web site: www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Dr Gill Robinson, HMCI whose address is given below. If you are unhappy with the response, you will be told in writing what further steps you may take.

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