
Standard Inspection of Drumbrae Primary School and Nursery Class City of Edinburgh Council

1. Introduction

Drumbrae Primary School has a roll of 273, including 46 children in the nursery class. The school serves parts of the Drumbrae and East Craigs districts in the west of Edinburgh. Attendance was in line with national levels.

The inspection took place in June 1999 as part of a national sample of primary education. It evaluated how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

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

The results of a questionnaire sent to a sample of parents were taken into account during the inspection. Members of the inspection team also met the Chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

2. How well are pupils performing?

In English language, the overall quality of attainment was good. At P1 and P2 most pupils had made a good start in developing literacy skills. At P3, P4 and P5, most pupils attained appropriate 5-14 levels in *listening, talking, reading* and *writing*. At P6 and P7 the majority of pupils reached these standards, except in writing where less than half reached the levels. Pupils at all stages listened carefully to teachers' explanations and responded well orally. Many pupils had developed good personal reading habits. In writing, most pupils presented their work neatly, but at P6 and P7 many pupils needed to develop their skills, in particular in personal and imaginative writing.

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good and most pupils performed well in their coursework. Almost all pupils at P3, but less than half at P7, were meeting appropriate national targets in *information handling; number, money and measurement; and shape, position and movement*. However, P7 pupils made skilled use of computers to collate and display information. Although pupils enjoyed the regular opportunities provided to practise mental calculation, the majority performed calculations slowly. Overall, pupils' *problem*

solving and enquiry skills required further development

Pupils' attainment in their environmental studies coursework was good. Most pupils were attaining appropriate standards in the aspects of *science, geography, and history* they had studied. Their knowledge and understanding of *health education and information and communications technology (ICT)* were good. In *technology* pupils had some understanding of the design process, but their knowledge of applications of technology in society required further development. At all stages pupils had a good knowledge and understanding of procedures designed to ensure their health and safety.

3. How effective is the school?

Parents' views

Less than half of parents who received a questionnaire responded. Most of the parents who responded expressed high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school and the nursery class.

- All thought the school was well led and were confident that if they raised a concern the school would do something about it.
- All thought that their children were encouraged to work to the best of their ability, were treated fairly and would be helped if they had difficulties.
- Almost all thought that their children enjoyed school and were stimulated, and

that meetings with teachers had been useful.

However, some parents of children in both the nursery class and primary classes wanted better information about their children's progress.

Ethos

The school and nursery class had a very good ethos. Staff had a positive approach and worked well as a team to support pupils. Most pupils were proud to be identified with the school. Appropriate steps were taken to ensure that pupils' achievements were recognised and to raise expectations that everyone could achieve. Many pupils were involved in extra-curricular activities.

School and community

The school had very good links with parents and the wider community. Pupils participated in a wide range of local activities.

- The School Board and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) supported the work of the school very well.
- A range of newsletters gave parents information about school and nursery events and about what pupils were learning.
- Parents received regular feedback on their children's progress through written reports and meetings with teachers.
- Parents and teachers worked in partnership in supporting pupils' behaviour and their learning, in particular their reading.

Accommodation

Overall, the quality of the accommodation was good. The school had extensive space for teaching and learning. Generally, the building was in good order, but some areas required redecoration.

Teaching areas were generally of an appropriate size. The school had used additional teaching space to provide a very good computer suite, a library and other subject-dedicated teaching areas. There were spacious grounds with a good mix of gardens and grassed and hard play areas.

A few health and safety issues were drawn to the attention of the headteacher.

Staffing and resources

Overall, the school was well staffed. Teachers had an appropriate range of experience and skills. Class teachers were well supported by a number of specialists for part of the week. Support staff carried out their duties efficiently.

Resources for teaching and learning were good and had been very well organised. Materials for English language were in very good supply. More software, particularly for mathematics, was required to take full advantage of the very good computer provision. The headteacher managed the school's devolved budget very effectively.

Curriculum

The nursery curriculum covered all aspects identified in national advice. Planning was undertaken regularly but needed to specify more clearly what the children were expected to learn.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Children were happy and secure in nursery routines. Many were independent, co-operative and persevering.
- In the programme for communication and language very good attention was paid to the development of children's early reading and writing skills. Children listened and responded very well to stories and rhymes.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was very good. Staff provided a variety of activities to encourage children's skills of observation and enquiry. Children had good opportunities to sort, classify and count.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Children were developing a range of skills and techniques in art. They enjoyed singing and role play.
- In physical development and movement children had very good opportunities to develop control over fine movements. Very good use of the outdoor area and school gym enabled children to experience regular energetic physical play.

The primary curriculum gave appropriate attention to all of the areas included in national advice. However, there was a need to monitor more closely the match between what teachers planned and the actual balance of pupils' experience of the different areas of the curriculum.

Overall, the programme for English language was good. Generally, pupils had appropriate opportunities to develop their listening, talking, and reading skills. In particular, good attention was paid to encouraging pupils to read for pleasure. Across the stages, there needed to be more consistent attention to developing pupils' knowledge about language and of the ways in which writers achieve effects. In implementing the new programme in writing care should be taken to ensure that pupils' skills are developed progressively.

The mathematics programme was good overall. Commendably, mental calculation was given particular emphasis. There was good provision for the development of pupils' skills in shape and position, and handling information. However, pupils needed greater experience of problem solving and enquiry activities. They also needed more regular opportunities to learn and use number, money and measurement facts.

The programme in environmental studies was continuing to be developed. The course covered a good range of topics but these needed to focus more clearly upon the development of aspects of pupils' knowledge and understanding described in national guidelines. The new assessment framework which the school was developing should reflect this change in emphasis. Overall, there should be more attention to technology.

Learning and teaching

Overall, the quality of learning and teaching was good.

In the nursery class:

- children were highly motivated and concentrated on their play;
- staff interacted well with the children but should intervene more frequently to extend the complexity of their play; and
- staff observed children carefully but should now make more effective use of the information they gathered to plan next steps in learning.

In the primary classes:

- most teachers used a good range of teaching and learning methods, including effective use of homework;
- teachers planned and prepared lessons well;
- the overall quality of pupils' learning was good, but there was some variation across classes and some activities were insufficiently challenging;
- teachers used a good range of approaches to assessment and had recently extended their use of national tests in reading and mathematics to include writing; and
- more use should be made of assessment information to identify next steps in pupils' learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of learning.

Support for pupils

Teachers took steps to support their pupils' learning and to promote their achievement.

They knew pupils well and most planned successfully to take account of the range of needs in their classes. Staff had agreed a good range of policies for supporting pupils' intellectual and emotional development. They operated a very successful scheme for behaviour support.

Support for learning was effectively organised to ensure that a significant number of pupils could benefit from small group tuition. Pupils experiencing difficulties in English language received very good support. Consideration should now be given to extending this to other aspects of the curriculum.

Very good arrangements were in place to review and to meet the particular requirements of pupils with Records of Needs.

4. How well is the school managed?

Staff management and leadership

The headteacher gave very clear leadership to the school. She worked very effectively with both the staff team and the wider community. Parents held her in very high regard. In her four years in post she and the staff had achieved a great deal. Together they had carried out an extensive programme of development aimed at improving the quality of pupils' experience. She had established very clearly that this was an improving school where every child should expect to achieve.

The depute headteacher had given good support to the headteacher's approach. The senior

teacher carried out the wide range of duties in her remit very well.

Aims and policy making

The school had a comprehensive set of aims, which had been agreed amongst staff and with parents. These should be simplified so that they can be used as a basis for evaluating developments.

The school had devised an impressive range of good policy statements, containing practical advice for teachers about teaching approaches, curriculum progression and resources. These included careful attention to health education issues and to behaviour support.

Quality assurance

Arrangements for assuring quality in the school were good. The headteacher commented upon teachers' plans and visited classes to observe learning and teaching, with a focus upon a particular theme. She paid close attention to patterns of pupils' attainment across the school. Teachers had made use of performance indicators published in *How Good Is Our School?* as a basis for their judgements about quality. The school should now ensure that arrangements are in place to support staff if monitoring identifies a need for improvement.

School development planning

The school's development plan summarised clearly the priorities that the school had identified. In a succinct form, it set out the links between the school's audit of its own work, planned projects for improvement and the ways in which success was to be evaluated. The plan gave appropriate attention to promoting pupils' achievement.

Staff development and review

The school operated a good programme for staff development, closely linked to the priorities identified in the development plan. All staff had participated recently in a programme of professional review.

Approaches to improving quality

Drumbrae Primary School provided a good quality of education for most of its pupils, but there was some variation across classes. The school placed a clear emphasis upon improving pupils' attainment and raising standards across the school. Good use had been made of development planning to improve courses for pupils. The school had put in place clear policies for promoting pupils' numeracy and literacy.

5. Key strengths of the school

This good school was improving rapidly and had many strengths, including:

- The clear and purposeful leadership of the headteacher.
- Very good use of the extensive accommodation.
- A very effective behaviour management system.
- An appropriate emphasis on raising attainment.
- Good teamwork amongst staff in developing comprehensive guidance for teachers on aspects of the curriculum.

- Very good provision for health education.

6. Main points for action

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

- Arrangements should be put in place to enable the school to monitor the amount of time pupils spend working in different areas of the curriculum. The information from this monitoring should be used to make adjustments to the balance of the curriculum.
- In implementing the new programme for teaching writing care should be taken to ensure that pupils' skills are developed progressively.
- The programme in mathematics should be adjusted to ensure that problem-solving and enquiry receive sufficient attention.
- In environmental studies, teachers should identify clearly what pupils are expected to learn and how their learning will be assessed.
- More use should be made of assessment information for planning next steps in pupils' learning and for monitoring the effectiveness of different approaches.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations.

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.

If you want to make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to the HM Chief Inspector 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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on behalf of HM Chief Inspector of Schools
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Appendix

HM Inspectors use indicators of quality when making judgements about the work of a school. These indicators have been published so that schools can use them to evaluate their own work.

This appendix summarises some of the findings contained in this report about the effectiveness of the school and how well it is managed. It also summarises HM Inspectors' evaluations of the quality of the lessons observed.

<i>very good</i>	major strengths
<i>good</i>	more strengths than weaknesses
<i>fair</i>	some important weaknesses
<i>unsatisfactory</i>	major weaknesses

The effectiveness of the school and how well it is managed.

We judged the following to be *very good*

- The school's ethos
- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- The school's management of devolved finances
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- The school development plan

We judged the following to be *good*

- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Provision of staff, their qualifications and experience
- Provision of materials and equipment
- The structure of the curriculum
- 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 the learning support

- Effectiveness of promoted staff and senior teachers
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work
- Implementing the school development plan
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

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 the lessons observed.

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 11% of cases, good in 67% and fair in 22%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.