

**St Fergus RC Primary School  
Dundee City Council**

**30 April 2002**

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# **Inspection of Standards and Quality in St Fergus RC Primary School Dundee City Council**

## **1. Introduction**

St Fergus RC Primary School was inspected in January 2002 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 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 religious and moral education.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents. A member of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

## **2. The school**

The school serves the Ardler regeneration area in the north-west of Dundee. At the time of the inspection the roll was 210. The roll included seven pupils with special educational needs. Some pupils attended the school because of its designation as a 'resourced location.'

**Parents' views**

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the work of the school.

Almost all thought that:

- children enjoyed being at school and found the work stimulating and challenging;
- teachers treated pupils fairly and encouraged them to work to the best of their abilities;
- parents' meetings were useful and the school was good at explaining its work; and
- the school was well led and had a good reputation in the community.

**Ethos**

The school's ethos was very good. Pupils were polite and proud of their school. Morale was high, and relationships among pupils and almost all teachers were very positive. Teachers generally had high expectations of pupils' attainment, attendance and behaviour. Staff used praise regularly and worked hard to raise pupils' self-esteem. Pupils' views were sought through an active school council. Assemblies celebrated pupils' successes and promoted their involvement in the school. There were regular opportunities for religious observance through daily prayers, weekly assemblies and special Masses. Attendance was in line with the national average.

**School and community**

The school had established very good links with parents, other schools, educational support services and the wider community.

- The School Board and parent-teacher association gave very good support to the work of the school.
- A parents' handbook, regular newsletters and written reports kept parents well informed. Reports to parents

did not always provide sufficiently clear information about the next steps in pupils' learning.

- The school had surveyed parents' views on aspects of the work of the school.
- Links with the Church and associated schools were positive.

### **Accommodation**

The overall quality of accommodation and facilities was very good. Classroom areas were well decorated and maintained. Additional facilities included a well-used library, an information and communications technology (ICT) suite, and music and technology rooms. Security arrangements were appropriate.

### **Staffing and resources**

The school was very well staffed. Teachers and visiting specialists provided a wide range of experience and expertise. Ancillary staff made valuable contributions to the life of the school.

Resources were very good overall and supported all areas of the curriculum. The school had a plentiful supply of modern computers and related equipment. The acting headteacher managed the devolved budget effectively to support development priorities.

## **3. How well are pupils performing?**

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils performed well in their coursework, although some would have benefited from greater challenge. Most listened attentively and talked with confidence. They read regularly for enjoyment and generally had a good understanding of the texts they had read. At the early and upper stages most pupils were making good progress in planning and writing stories. At the middle stages the majority wrote well for a variety of

purposes, but some did not structure their writing well enough. Most pupils at all stages attained appropriate national levels in *listening* and *talking*. Most at the early stages and the majority at the middle and upper stages were achieving these levels in *reading* and *writing*.

## **Mathematics**

In mathematics the overall quality of attainment was fair. Most pupils successfully completed their classwork and were developing good skills in written calculation. Some pupils needed more support to help them retain the knowledge they had gained. In a few classes the pace of progress was sometimes too slow. Throughout the school, pupils were benefiting from a recent emphasis on mental arithmetic. However, a substantial minority at the middle and upper stages were too slow in performing mental calculations. At the upper stages, most pupils had good skills in presenting and interpreting data and had a good knowledge and understanding of shape. Almost all pupils at the early stages and the majority at the middle and upper stages were attaining appropriate national levels in *information handling, number, money and measurement*, and in *shape, position and movement*. Some pupils at the early and upper stages were exceeding these levels. A good start had been made to developing skills in *problem solving and enquiry* throughout the school. However, pupils from P4 to P7 were not sufficiently aware of the range of strategies they could use in problem solving.

## **Religious and moral education**

In religious and moral education the overall quality of attainment was good. Most pupils at all stages showed a good understanding of key features of Christianity and the importance of the sacraments. They could recall Bible stories and were aware of the significance of Christian celebrations. However, their knowledge of other world religions was too limited.

In *personal search*, many pupils understood and respected the views and feelings of others. They showed positive attitudes to the environment and were able to reflect thoughtfully on the need for moral codes in society.

#### **4. How good is the curriculum?**

The school had very good arrangements to ensure that pupils received a broad and balanced curriculum which included French or German in P6 and P7.

##### **English language**

The programme for English language was good overall. Pupils were given good opportunities to develop their skills in listening, talking and reading. Teachers needed more detailed guidance on developing pupils' writing skills.

##### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of the mathematics programme was good. Pupils were given good opportunities to develop their skills in information handling, shape, position and movement and number, money and measurement. The programme had recently been improved to give increased attention to developing pupils' skills in mental calculation. More emphasis was needed on teaching strategies for problem solving.

##### **Religious and moral education**

The programme for religious and moral education was good. It covered Christianity well and provided pupils with good opportunities to reflect on personal attitudes, beliefs and values. It gave too little attention to features of other world religions.

#### **5. How good is learning and teaching?**

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. While the quality of the lessons observed ranged from very good to unsatisfactory, most were good or better.

Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

- Most teachers planned carefully in English language, mathematics and religious and moral education. Plans set out clearly what pupils were expected to learn. There was a need for greater consistency in planning pupils' next steps in learning.
- Most staff used an appropriate range of teaching approaches and their explanations were clear. In mathematics most teachers made very effective use of direct teaching, particularly to improve skills in mental calculation. Homework was generally well organised and appropriate.
- In almost all classes pupils worked conscientiously and responded positively to the encouragement and praise given by their teachers. Most pupils worked enthusiastically on tasks and co-operated well with each other.
- Teachers generally matched tasks well to pupils' needs. However, in some classes the pace of teaching was too slow. Arrangements for pupils to work in ability groups in mathematics at the upper stages were contributing to improved attainment. In religious and moral education tasks were often undemanding.
- Assessment and recording procedures were well developed in English language and mathematics. A good start had been made to tracking pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers used National Tests to confirm their judgements of pupils' attainment. However, in mathematics some pupils were not given the Tests when they were ready to take them. Staff were developing good approaches to assessment in religious and moral education.

## 6. How well are pupils supported?

### Care and welfare

Staff provided very good support for pupils' care and welfare. They knew their pupils well and almost all encouraged positive behaviour effectively. There were very good procedures for child protection and for dealing with incidents where pupils' health might be at risk.

### Personal and social development

Staff made very good provision for pupils' personal and social development through a range of worthwhile classroom experiences and visits. They also worked successfully to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils in P7 were given responsibilities in assisting younger children in a variety of activities. There was a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

The school made very good provision for health education, including aspects of personal safety, and education about drugs and personal relationships.

### Support for learning

Arrangements to support pupils' learning were very good. Learning support teachers and staff from the resource base worked well together to support the needs of a large number of pupils throughout the school. Positive features included:

- very well-planned individual and group teaching for pupils with learning difficulties which enabled them to make very good progress;
- very good use of ICT to support pupils' learning; and
- very effective links between staff and a wide range of support agencies.

Staff had created good individualised educational programmes (IEPs) which allowed pupils' progress to be effectively monitored. Parents now needed to be more

involved in developing these programmes. Legislation for special educational needs was very well implemented.

## **7. How well is the school managed?**

### **Overall management and leadership**

At the time of the inspection the school was being led by an acting headteacher and an acting depute headteacher. During her 18 months in post the acting headteacher had provided good leadership. She was very committed to the school and had established effective relationships with pupils, staff and parents. She had worked hard to introduce a framework of quality improvement and had led staff well in developing an ethos of achievement.

The acting depute headteacher gave good support to the acting headteacher and staff. He had contributed effectively to curriculum developments in mathematics and ICT. The senior teachers supported colleagues well, and made valuable contributions to the work of the school. Remits for senior promoted staff required to be updated to ensure that they matched the school's current priorities.

The school's aims were appropriate and provided a good basis for evaluating its work. There was a wide range of useful policies to provide advice to staff about important aspects of their work.

### **Staff development and review**

Teachers had taken part in a good range of appropriate staff development activities that were suitably linked to the school development plan. All staff had received recent training in the use of ICT. Only a few staff had had their work reviewed as part of the education authority's scheme for staff development and review.

### **School development planning**

The school development plan was very well constructed and based on a detailed audit of the school's work. Staff and the School Board had been consulted in creating the

plan. Staff had worked very well as a team and had made very good progress in implementing the plan.

### **Approaches to improving quality**

The school's approach to evaluating its work was good. The senior management team monitored learning and teaching through regular discussions with teachers about their plans, a planned programme of classroom visits and through sampling pupils' work. The acting headteacher had produced a useful report which evaluated standards and quality in the school. The school took good account of the views of parents and pupils in reviewing aspects of its work. The senior management team did not yet make effective use of attainment information to set targets for groups and individuals.

## **8. How well does the school perform overall?**

Overall, the school provided a good quality of education. There were examples of some very good teaching. The acting headteacher and staff were hard-working, caring and committed. They now needed to focus on ensuring greater consistency in aspects of learning and teaching to improve pupils' attainment.

### **Key strengths**

- The school's ethos.
- Partnership with parents and the School Board.
- The care, commitment and teamwork of staff.
- The overall quality of support for pupils.
- The arrangements for school development planning.

**Main points for action**

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

- Further raise attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Continue to improve specific aspects of the programmes in English language, mathematics and religious and moral education.
- Improve the degree of consistency across the school in the pace of teaching and learning.
- Fully implement the education authority's scheme for staff development and review.

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.

Anne Park  
HM Inspector  
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector  
Northern Division

30 April 2002

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 accommodation and facilities
- Provision of staff
- Provision of materials and equipment
- The school's management of devolved finances
- The structure of the curriculum
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- The school development plan
- Implementing the school development plan

#### **We judged the following to be *good***

- 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 leadership of the school
- Effectiveness of promoted staff and senior teachers
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work

#### **We judged the following to be *fair***

- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

#### **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 46% of cases, good in 35%, fair in 15% and unsatisfactory in 4%.

## 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 01382 224155. Copies are also available on our web site: [www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie](http://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 Bill Maxwell, 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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