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# Standard Inspection of Whitfield Primary School Dundee City Council

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## 1. Introduction

Whitfield Primary School serves an area of urban regeneration on the northern outskirts of Dundee. At the time of the inspection it had a roll of 286 pupils, organised into 13 classes. Almost half the pupils were entitled to receive free school meals.

The inspection took place in November and December 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 representatives of the School Board and a group of parents.

## 2. How well are pupils performing?

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils at the early and middle stages and the majority at the upper stages achieved appropriate national levels in *listening, talking, reading* and *writing*. Pupils made good progress in appropriate coursework in listening, talking, reading and writing. Most listened attentively and talked well in groups. Pupils in P1 and P2 were developing their reading and writing skills at a good pace. Pupils in P3-P7 had a good knowledge about language. Many read for pleasure and wrote well for a variety of purposes. At the upper stages pupils gave good personal responses to poetry.

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Most pupils at the early and middle stages and the majority at the upper stages were achieving appropriate national levels in *number, money and measurement* and *shape, position and movement*. Although most pupils at all stages were reaching appropriate national levels in *information handling*, they had insufficient experience of using computers to organise and display information. Attainment in *problem solving and enquiry* was fair. Pupils at the upper stages often lacked confidence in tackling problems. Throughout the school pupils coped well with appropriately demanding classwork. Standards in written and

mental number work were good in almost all classes. Pupils had very good understanding of work involving money, time, measurement, shape and position.

In environmental studies most pupils were attaining very good standards in coursework in aspects of *science* and *history*. Standards were good in *geography*, *technology*, *health education* and *information technology*. Features of pupils' attainment included the following.

- Pupils at all stages had developed some very good skills in carrying out science experiments, including observing and recording results. Pupils at P3 had good knowledge of plant growth. At the middle stages they had good understanding of the solar system and aspects of light. Those at the upper stages had good knowledge of electricity.
- In geography pupils at all stages were developing appropriate mapping skills. By the middle stages they were aware of geographical features and their effects on people and places.
- Pupils showed clear understanding of historical evidence, and had very good knowledge of key features of the historical eras they had studied.
- Pupils could explain clearly some everyday applications of technology. Their skills in designing and making were developing well at the early stages.

- In health education pupils had good knowledge of hygiene, personal safety and issues relating to healthy lifestyles.
- In information technology pupils at all stages were developing very good word processing skills, but their skills in aspects of information handling were only fair.

### 3. How effective is the school?

#### *Parents' views*

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. In particular they felt that their children enjoyed school, were treated fairly and would be helped if having difficulties. All parents believed the school was well resourced. A significant minority of parents had concerns about pupils' behaviour.

#### *Ethos*

The school had a very positive ethos. It welcomed visitors, and had a very friendly and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils got on very well together, and had very good relationships with their teachers. The caring and committed staff valued and praised the efforts of all pupils, and expected high standards of behaviour from them. Pupils generally responded positively by being polite and well behaved. Older pupils showed maturity in looking after younger ones. Pupils and staff took great pride in their school. Residential trips had contributed positively to pupils' personal development. Opportunities for religious observance were insufficient at all stages. Attendance was below national levels.

*School and community*

Relationships between the school and its community were very good. Positive features are listed below.

- An active School Board provided very good support to the school.
- Parents were kept very well informed by twice-yearly parent interviews, informative, annual written reports, open days, curriculum evenings and information booklets. Many parents took the opportunity to consult teachers at other times by taking advantage of the school's open-door policy.
- Commendable efforts had been made to establish an effective partnership with parents by involving them in the education authority's early intervention project.
- Parents' views were sought through surveys, and appropriate action was taken on the responses.
- The school had very effective links with the local nursery, and productive working relationships with other local schools, including the associated secondary school. Regular contact and exchange visits had also been made with a number of schools around the world.
- The school had achieved considerable recognition from its participation in a range of successful national and international projects.

- A broad range of visits gave pupils very good opportunities to use the community as a learning resource. Parents and friends of the school provided effective assistance in school.

*Accommodation*

The accommodation was very good. The building was well maintained. The reception area was very attractive. Displays of pupils' work created a stimulating environment for learning throughout the school. Sign-posting for visitors needed to be improved.

*Staffing and resources*

The school was very well staffed and had a good range of resources. Provision of computers was very good. Non-teaching staff gave valuable support to the school.

The school was fully involved in the education authority's scheme for devolved school management. The headteacher managed finances very well and had been very successful in gaining additional funds to support educational initiatives.

*Curriculum*

The curriculum included all areas recommended in national advice, but lacked the required balance of experience for pupils. At all stages too little time was devoted to religious and moral education. Pupils in P6 and P7 were learning French or German.

The programme in English language was very good. It was broad and balanced and was in line with national advice. Staff provided a very good range of opportunities for pupils to develop listening, talking and reading skills. Very good

attention was given to writing for a variety of purposes. Poetry was given good emphasis at all stages.

The mathematics programme was generally well designed. It gave very good emphasis to number work and mental calculation. Further attention should be given to developing pupils' computer skills in handling data, and to increasing their awareness of strategies for solving problems.

The school had developed a very good programme for environmental studies in line with national guidance. The planning format clearly identified how skills in each outcome should be developed to ensure continuous progress. Staff had introduced appropriate assessment procedures.

*Learning and teaching*

Key features of learning and teaching included the following.

- Teachers at all stages planned very carefully and systematically. The shared planning formats were also used effectively to evaluate and record progress.
- Teachers had high expectations of achievement. Classwork was stimulating and provided good challenge for all pupils. Direct teaching methods were often used very effectively.
- Homework was used effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils were generally well motivated and enthusiastic in their learning.

- Staff used a wide and effective range of assessments to ensure that all pupils progressed at a good pace.
- National Tests were used to confirm teachers' assessments in reading, writing and mathematics.

Overall, the quality of teaching was very good. Teachers knew their pupils very well, and met their individual needs effectively. The quality of learning was good. The supportive atmosphere and use of praise encouraged pupils to work well.

*Support for pupils*

Teachers gave good support to all pupils in their classwork and in their personal and social development. Pupils at the early stages were being given good support in developing their literacy skills. The recently appointed learning support teachers had made a good start to providing effective help to pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning. Programmes for individuals and groups were generally of good quality. The school was aware of the need to improve arrangements for liaison between the learning support teachers and class teachers. Statutory requirements relating to pupils with Records of Needs were well met. The programme for health education was good and teachers successfully promoted positive behaviour.

## 4. How well is the school managed?

### *Staff management and leadership*

The headteacher was a very good leader who demonstrated a high level of professional competence in managing a large team. He had provided clear vision and had been instrumental in ensuring the school was at the forefront of many new educational initiatives. He had gained the respect of parents and staff. He had been successful in creating a strong and caring school ethos in which both staff and pupils felt valued. His knowledge of and relationships with pupils were very good.

The deputy headteacher had an appropriate remit. He supported the headteacher well and had been a key figure in successfully promoting positive behaviour among pupils.

The senior teachers effectively carried out their duties and frequently undertook additional responsibilities. They provided good advice for their colleagues. Teachers worked very well as a team. They were very conscientious, hard working and strongly committed to the school.

### *Aims and policy making*

The school's aims were clear and relevant. They were given appropriate prominence in the work of the school, including development planning. The school had a broad set of policies. Staff were fully and effectively involved in policy making. Procedures for dealing with incidents where pupils' health might be at risk were good.

### *School development planning*

The quality of the school development plan was good. It included a careful audit of the school's strengths and development needs. Action plans linked well to school aims. Recent developments, including work on early intervention and assessment, had been implemented successfully. Good progress had been made in raising pupils' attainment.

### *Staff development and review*

An appropriate programme of staff development was in place, linked effectively to the development plan. All staff had been reviewed under the authority's previous staff development and review arrangements. The headteacher had recently been reviewed as part of the education authority's new scheme. The deputy headteacher was about to be reviewed, prior to the involvement of all staff in the scheme. Probationer teachers participated in the school's own thorough and supportive review process.

### *Approaches to improving quality*

The school's arrangements for quality assurance were very good. The senior management team and staff had devised an effective system for forward planning. Members of the management team reviewed teachers' plans and provided constructive feedback on them. They visited classes regularly to monitor learning and teaching, scrutinised pupils' work and participated in team teaching. Effective systems had been introduced for monitoring individual pupils' and class progress. The school had begun to make very good use of national performance indicators to review and evaluate its work.

Overall, the school provided a very good quality of education for its pupils. Through very good teaching, effective assessment systems and the support of a caring ethos pupils attained good standards. The school's determination to improve pupils' attendance, motivation and behaviour demonstrated a clear commitment to further improving standards of attainment.

## 5. Key strengths of the school

- The very good ethos based on high expectations of pupils and on the use of praise to motivate them.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Very good links with the community, and the high quality of communication and partnership with parents.
- The high standard of computing facilities provided by the authority.
- Very good teaching and the strong teamwork and commitment of staff.
- Very good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress.
- The very good leadership provided by the headteacher.

## 6. Main points for action

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

- To raise attainment in mathematics further attention should be given to improving pupils' abilities in problem solving.
- The promising developments in using new computer systems should include a focus on improving pupils' skills in handling data.
- The frequency of religious observance, and the time allocated to religious and moral education should be increased in line with national guidance.

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

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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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## 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
- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Provision of staff, their qualifications and experience
- The school's management of devolved finances
- Quality of teachers' planning
- Quality of the teaching process
- Using assessment to guide the teaching process
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- Effectiveness of promoted staff and senior teachers
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

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

- Provision of materials and equipment
- The structure of the curriculum
- Quality of courses or programmes
- Quality of pupils' learning

- Matching the teaching process to pupils' needs and experience
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- The school development plan
- Implementing the school development plan

**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 44% of cases, good in 52% and fair in 4%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.