

**Lincluden Primary School
and Nursery Class
Dumfries and Galloway Council
10 June 2008**

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1. Background

Lincluden Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in March 2008 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 nursery children's and 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 the quality of the children's experience in the nursery and 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 and a group of parents¹.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school serves an area of North West Dumfries. At the time of the inspection the roll was 262, including 45 children in the nursery class. The school included a Learning Centre for pupils with additional support needs. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The high quality of experience for children in the nursery class and pupils at the early stages of the primary school.
- Strong and improving links with parents and the community.
- The increasing impact of curriculum innovation on the quality of pupils' learning.
- Good teaching at most stages in the school.
- Concern for the care and welfare of pupils, including the quality of support for pupils with additional needs.
- The commitment and vision of the headteacher for the future development of the school.

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.

Parents of nursery children were very satisfied with the quality of education and care provided for their children. Parents of pupils from P1 to P7 were satisfied overall with the school. They felt welcome in the school and were pleased with the information they received about its activities and their children's progress. They were satisfied that their children were well cared for and that the school would respond to any concerns they might have. Several commented that the school had improved over the last two years and was establishing a better reputation in the community. Pupils were positive overall. Most enjoyed being at school and felt they were well taught. They felt safe and secure within the school, but thought that the behaviour of some pupils let the school down. Most staff were positive about their jobs and their role in caring for pupils and encouraging them to achieve. A minority felt that communication and teamwork with senior managers needed to improve.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Staff in the nursery class provided a suitably broad curriculum with a varied range of interesting learning experiences. Most children responded very well to the play experiences, made independent choices and were motivated in their learning. Staff needed to involve children further in planning their learning opportunities. From P1 to P7 the curriculum was appropriately broad. Some innovative approaches were being introduced to ensure that the curriculum met pupils' needs more effectively. From P1 to P3, active learning initiatives were well planned, with good links between aspects of English language, mathematics, drama, technology and information and communications technology (ICT). From P4 onwards, approaches to teaching literacy were being reviewed to encourage more interest in books, better knowledge about language and better themes for writing. The work of the artist in residence was providing a valuable enhancement to pupils' experience in the expressive arts. There was good use of local contexts to encourage education for citizenship, enterprise and sustainable development. The school was taking appropriate steps to build up to the national recommendation of two hours of physical education each week for all pupils. Further improvement in the continuity of pupils' experience was still needed, particularly in the development of skills and competences as they progressed through the stages. Staff in the nursery class had developed very positive relationships with the children and used praise well to celebrate their achievements and raise their self esteem. They used questioning and discussion effectively, to extend children's thinking and involve them in their learning. From P1 to P7, the overall quality of teaching was good. There was an appropriate range of teaching approaches overall, with regular emphasis on paired and collaborative learning. Most teachers planned their lessons well and engaged pupils' interest in their learning. Some teaching was very effective, with teachers skilled in questioning pupils, encouraging them to express their views and responding well to their answers. Teachers made effective use of the

ICT facilities available, but pupils' development was adversely affected by insufficient resources. Varied and interesting approaches to homework were proving effective in establishing partnership between pupils, teachers and parents. A few lessons were not well planned and did not engage pupils in their learning.

Children in the nursery class were making very good progress in expressive and aesthetic development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development and movement. Most children were enthusiastic about role play and acted out roles in the home corner and outdoors. They were involved in a wide range of creative experiences using art and craft materials. Most enjoyed singing and a few experimented with percussion instruments. Most children were developing appropriate skills on the computer, and in problem solving using programmable toys. They were developing investigative skills through a range of activities, including using torches, magnets and magnifying glasses. They were developing skills in physical coordination and had daily access to energetic play both indoors and out. From P1 to P7, most pupils were enthusiastic, well motivated and keen to learn. Most responded well when given responsibility for their learning, for example in the activity based learning at P1 to P3, problem solving in mathematics at P5, discussion of environmental and educational issues at P5 and P6 and discussion of reading at P5 to P7. They learned well independently and collaboratively when the contexts were interesting and relevant, and supported each other on tasks. A few lessons required better planning, pace and challenge.

Nursery and school staff were taking good steps to encourage children's and pupils' wider achievements and their emotional, personal and social development. Children in the nursery class were confident and enthusiastic. Many were developing friendships. They were learning to share toys and take turns when playing. Children were developing independence when undertaking personal tasks. Throughout the school, most staff promoted pupils' personal and social development in class and in wider school activities. Pupils were encouraged to show their skills and talents at assemblies, in class and before Parent Council meetings. The pupil council had been reformed to include members of the Eco Group and the School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) and was proving a useful forum for developing pupils' citizenship skills and sense of responsibility. The pupil council was playing a valuable role, particularly in the planning process for the new school building. Most pupils were developing their confidence and sense of achievement through the range of sports and after-school clubs that were available, including animation and computer clubs.

English language

Children in the nursery class were making very good progress in communication and language. Most were confident when talking to one another and adults, and enjoyed sharing their experiences. Almost all enjoyed listening to stories and rhymes. Most were enthusiastic in imaginative role play. Pupils' overall attainment in English language at P1 to P7 was adequate. Attainment levels had declined overall in reading over recent years and had remained weak in writing. However, pupils were beginning to make steady progress from their prior levels of attainment, particularly at the early stages, partly as a result of more active learning and recent initiatives in improving literacy. They were eager to express their views in class and group discussion and could convey their understanding clearly. They listened well to instructions and for information, but listened less well to each other in group discussions. Most read

accurately, but from P4 their fluency and comprehension were adversely affected by lack of skill in dealing with unfamiliar words. The recent school initiatives were beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' interest in books and authors. There was significant variation across the school in the quality and range of pupils' writing. At some stages, pupils were responding well to new approaches and were beginning to communicate well. In other cases, the standards of extended writing were too variable and pupils needed more help in organising their writing and improving its quality. Standards of spelling and handwriting were too variable at the middle and upper stages.

Mathematics

Progress in mathematics in the nursery class was good. Most children were able to sort and match objects by shape and colour. They were learning about days of the week and had an understanding of time sequences that related to the nursery day. Most were able to count confidently and a few could recognise numbers. A few used appropriate mathematical language in play situations. They had insufficient opportunities to explore mathematical concepts during play activities. From P1 to P7, attainment in mathematics was adequate. In recent years, the majority of pupils had attained appropriate national levels, although there had been significant fluctuations from year to year. There had been some recent improvement in attainment, but this was uneven between different stages. Pupils at the early stages were achieving national levels earlier than might normally be expected, but these gains were not always sustained. From P1 to P3, pupils solved problems related to number work well, and could construct and interpret bar graphs. They had very good knowledge of money, measurement and the properties of shapes. However, at P4 some were under-achieving and lacked sound knowledge of number, money and information handling. Pupils at P5 and P6 were suitably competent in number work, mental mathematics and problem solving and had good knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils in P7 worked accurately on fractions, decimals and percentages. Most were secure in their knowledge of money and the properties of shape and could estimate, measure accurately and record findings systematically. Some required consolidation of previous learning in order to maintain progress. Across the school, pupils were capable of using ICT in mathematics but their skills needed to be developed more systematically from stage to stage.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

In the nursery class, staff provided children with learning experiences which met most needs well. They made effective use of the outdoor area to enhance the quality of experiences for all children. Staff regularly observed children and assessed their responses to play activities. However, they did not use assessment information effectively enough to track children's progress in their learning or to identify next steps. The school had an effective programme of induction for children moving from nursery into P1. From P1 to P7, arrangements for meeting pupils' needs were good overall. In most classes the tasks, activities and resources were well chosen and relevant in meeting the range of needs. Children with additional needs were well supported in class by the teachers and classroom assistants. There were appropriate arrangements in place to refer pupils to the teacher of support for learning, who provided high quality contributions to literacy, numeracy and social and emotional needs. She liaised well with parents and provided valuable additional support for

vulnerable pupils. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) and Coordinated Support Plans supported the learning process for a number of pupils in mainstream classes and in the Learning Centre.

The Learning Centre was managed well by the principal teacher. Appropriate procedures were in place to ensure the smooth transition of pupils into the base and, where appropriate, back into mainstream classes. Staff planned balanced programmes of learning efficiently, to meet individual needs, with a strong focus on language and communication skills and personal and social development. Resources, including ICT, were well matched to individual needs. Parents and class teachers were kept well informed of pupils' progress and were involved in key stages of planning through reviews and meetings. Almost all pupils had detailed IEPs with suitable learning targets, which were monitored and evaluated at regular intervals. Teachers provided a calm and supportive environment for learning which promoted pupils' self esteem, confidence, independence and responsibility. Almost all pupils were making very good progress towards meeting their learning targets. The principal teacher was developing good opportunities for learning out in the community, including enterprise and health promotion activities, through visits to local facilities, shops and museums.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	From the nursery class to P7, arrangements for children's care and welfare were good. Nursery staff supported the emotional, personal and social development of children well. They involved children in the preparation of a healthy snack and brushing their teeth daily. Across the school, most staff were very well aware of the social and emotional needs of pupils and responded to them appropriately. All staff had been trained in child protection and were confident about procedures to be followed. There were appropriate policies for anti-bullying and anti-racism and for the safe use of the Internet. The school had recently reviewed its approaches to health promotion. Lunch times had been reorganised to increase social interaction between teachers and their classes. Pupils were encouraged to bring healthy snacks to school and were made aware of the benefits of healthy diet and exercise. There were suitable strategies to support vulnerable children and families, including partnership with relevant agencies. Pupils knew whom they could approach if they had problems and were confident that staff would listen to, and act on, concerns they had. There were good arrangements in place for transition from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school, including particular support for vulnerable children.

Aspect	Comment
<p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p>	<p>The management of space and resources was good overall. Work was due to begin on the building of a replacement school on the existing playing fields. The school made effective use of existing facilities and staff worked well to minimise the adverse effects of poor maintenance, particularly in respect of window blinds, lighting, ventilation and interior decoration. Staff made sustained efforts to brighten the school and reinforce its sense of identity with attractive displays including pupils' work in corridors, classrooms and the foyer. There was appropriate entrance security but access for people with restricted mobility was confined to the ground floor. Staff and pupils had worked well together to enhance the extensive grounds of the school with attractive garden and play areas.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The school was making a sustained effort to encourage positive behaviour. Most pupils behaved well for most of the time, except when lessons lacked pace and relevance. Most staff were skilled in managing and supporting those children whose behaviour was particularly challenging. Assemblies were used purposefully to acknowledge pupils' achievements and to promote the school's values. Most pupils felt they were treated fairly in the school. The school had a race equality policy but had not yet considered issues of equality and fairness within the curriculum, and in other aspects of school life, on a systematic basis. Pupils in the Learning Centre had appropriate opportunities to take part in class and school activities. There were effective arrangements for religious observance, supported by the school chaplain.</p>

Aspect	Comment
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school had achieved good progress with increasing the involvement of parents in the life of the school, an acknowledged priority within its improvement plan. Parents were appreciative of the headteacher's open door policy and his approachability on issues of concern. In the nursery class and at the early primary stages, there had been particularly effective steps taken to involve parents and inform them about pupils' learning experiences. Parents were positive about the quality of information they received on their children's progress and how they could help with homework. The Parent Council had been highly supportive, particularly in the process of consultation about the new building, and in its contribution to improving the school website. Parents were appropriately consulted on sensitive health issues and, on an annual basis, on the school's future priorities.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Lincluden Primary School and Nursery Class was an improving school which served its community well. The quality of teaching was good overall. Most pupils were enthusiastic learners. Care and welfare arrangements for pupils were well developed and effective in meeting the wide range of their needs. Pupils with additional needs were well supported. There were improving links with parents. Levels of attainment remained too low, but recent, well-planned curricular innovations were beginning to lead to improvements in pupils' learning.

The headteacher was highly committed to the school and to the welfare of its pupils. He had a clear vision for its future and a very accurate view of the priorities necessary in raising pupils' attainment, broadening their achievements and engaging them fully with their learning. Parents and pupils appreciated his openness and accessibility. Most staff recognised his commitment to active learning, curriculum innovation and support for pupils. He had facilitated change successfully, improving aspects of pupils' attainment and learning experiences. He had not yet fully succeeded in establishing teamwork across all staff. Communication needed to be improved. The headteacher was supported well by the deputy headteacher who had made significant contributions to the reviews of literacy at the upper stages and the strategy for supporting learners. Many other staff had initiated important curricular innovations, including active learning at the early stages and the teaching of literacy at the upper stages. With more effective partnership among staff, the school was well placed to achieve more improvements.

Most staff were aware of the need for more effective self-evaluation and were prepared to adapt practice in the light of experience. The senior management team had observed learning and teaching but the frequency of these observations had recently been affected by staffing difficulties. However, they knew pupils' needs well through informal visits to class and teaching at a range of stages. Managers and staff needed to improve strategic monitoring and evaluation of pupils' learning, and tracking of their progress and attainment. Staff had observed each other teaching and shared some of the very good practice in the school. There was significant scope to extend and develop these approaches.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were seven recommendations and one requirement. All had been addressed.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve pupils' achievements. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- develop further pupils' confidence in reading, listening skills and the range and quality of their writing;
- improve the pace and consistency of pupils' learning in mathematics;
- continue to plan and monitor the impact of curricular innovation related to active learning;
- improve approaches to the promotion of equality and fairness, particularly race equality issues;
- monitor and evaluate the progress of pupils' learning more systematically and effectively; and
- improve communication and teamwork across the school.

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.

Lachlan MacCallum
HM Inspector

10 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	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	adequate
Improvement in performance: English language	adequate
Improvement in performance: mathematics	adequate

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

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	adequate
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	adequate
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	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)	good
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"> • Helpful information about their children's progress. • Fair treatment for their children. • A welcoming atmosphere in the school. • Encouragement for their children to achieve. • Good information about the school's work and future priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the education authority, improve the maintenance of school buildings.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear explanations from teachers. • Encouragement by teachers for them to do well. • Sustained attention to keeping them safe and healthy. • Teachers' expectations of work and homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve behaviour of some pupils.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of good relationships with the local community. • Concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • Feedback to pupils on their work. • Celebration of pupils' successes. • Child protection procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between senior managers and staff. • Maintenance of standards for pupils' behaviour. • Responses to indiscipline.

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 Service Director for Schools 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, T1 Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8079. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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