

St Peter's Primary School Hamilton South Lanarkshire Council

2 September 2008

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1. Background

St Peter's Primary School was inspected in May 2008 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 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 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, and a group of parents¹.

St Peter's Primary School is a denominational school serving the Laighstonehall area of Hamilton. It forms part of the John Ogilvie Learning Community. At the time of the inspection the roll was 87. 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.

The education authority used surplus capacity within the building to temporarily accommodate pupils from other schools which were being rebuilt as part of its school modernisation programme. St Peter's Primary School was scheduled to be rebuilt in 2013.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The school's success in promoting equality and fairness and international understanding.
- Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Involvement of pupils in their own learning and the school's approaches to meeting their learning needs.
- The quality of care and welfare and the school's success in promoting healthy living amongst pupils.
- Leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of staff in improving experiences for pupils.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

Overall, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. They felt welcome in the school and reported that they received helpful information about their children's progress. They thought that their children enjoyed being at school. Pupils were pleased with almost all aspects of the school. They liked that they were told when they had done something well. They reported that the school helped them to stay safe and healthy. They thought teachers helped them with their work and explained things clearly. Staff were satisfied with all aspects of the school. They highlighted the school's efforts to promote good relationships with the community, the concern shown for the care and welfare of pupils, and the leadership of the headteacher.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

Pupils experienced a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers used additional time flexibly to develop pupils' learning across the curriculum and to help develop approaches in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. They were establishing productive links between curriculum areas to ensure learning was relevant and based on meaningful contexts. A notable strength was the attention paid to promoting awareness of the environment, equality, international understanding and healthy living. The school had taken steps to improve the opportunities for pupils at P1 to P3 to learn through play, though this required further development. Pupils from P5 to P7 benefited from opportunities to learn Spanish. The school was currently not able to deliver two hours of good quality physical education each week. Pupils' information and communications technology (ICT) skills were not yet developed systematically across the curriculum. The quality of teaching was good overall with some examples of very good practice. Teachers had created a stimulating and positive learning environment in their classes. They used a variety of teaching approaches effectively to motivate pupils and engage them

in their learning. Teachers gave clear instructions and helpful explanations. They mostly used questioning well to engage pupils and extend their thinking and made appropriate use of praise. Lessons were purposeful and well-paced. Homework was used well to support and consolidate classwork. In most lessons, teachers actively involved pupils in discussing what was to be learned, how success would be recognised and in summarising key points at the end.

Learners' experiences were very good overall. Pupils were exceptionally well behaved, attentive and completed tasks diligently. Throughout the school, they benefited from good opportunities to work together and discuss and develop their ideas as part of group activities. Pupils were increasingly aware of their own strengths as learners and how to improve aspects of their work. They were able to comment constructively on each other's work in areas of the curriculum such as English language and science. Almost all were making good progress.

Improvements in performance

The school had successfully maintained a very good level of performance overall.

Standards in English language were very good. Almost all pupils attained appropriate national levels in reading and most did so in writing. The school consistently achieved results above the average for schools with a similar background. A significant number of pupils at different stages of the school achieved national levels earlier than might normally be expected. Listening and talking were not yet systematically assessed across the school, but on the evidence available pupils were making good progress. Those with additional support needs were making very good progress. At all stages, pupils listened attentively and were able to express their ideas confidently and participate in discussions. Pupils read fluently and often with good expression. By P6 and P7, they were able to discuss favourite books and authors, offer comments on aspects of the author's writing and say what they liked and disliked. They did not, however, read widely for pleasure and this limited their knowledge of different books. Across the school, there were examples of high-quality pieces of writing for a range of purposes including in connection with topic work. Pupils at P2, for example, had produced accounts of how they had planted cress seeds. Older pupils were able to comment on the effectiveness of their writing and what might be done to improve it. Standards of handwriting and presentation were good.

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. In recent years, the school had maintained consistently high levels of attainment which were well above the average for the education authority. The school performed much better in mathematics than schools with a similar background. Across the stages, almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. At stages across the school, a high proportion of pupils were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils at all stages, including those not yet achieving appropriate national

levels, were making good progress in their coursework. At P1/P2, pupils had developed good understanding of basic mathematical skills. By P7, almost all pupils showed confidence in creating and interpreting a range of graphs and were developing their skills in using ICT to display information. They performed very well in mental and written calculations and had good understanding of number, money and measurement. They demonstrated good knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes and could discuss their properties confidently. Across the stages, pupils were developing their skills in problem-solving and enquiry. They were aware of a range of appropriate strategies and were becoming increasingly confident in applying them to solve problems.

Pupils had developed a range of important skills across the curriculum. At P1/P2 they had investigated whether different objects would sink or float, making predictions and testing them. They were currently working on their study of 'Our Street'. They were familiar with terms such as 'semi-detached' and 'terraced' and several of the P1 pupils could correctly identify these house types from photographs. In P2/P3 pupils had enjoyed carrying out simple experiments, observing and recording changes over time. In a mapping lesson at P5 to P7, pupils were undertaking appropriate tasks to develop their skills in drawing plans and sketching maps. The group at P5 had taken photographs of objects outside the school from directly above them to obtain a vertical view. They were using these photos to practise their skills at drawing plans. Pupils at P6 and P7 were drawing a map to scale and creating an appropriate key for their map.

The school took very good steps to promote and celebrate pupils' wider achievements. Pupils enjoyed considerable success as individuals and as a school in competitions and award schemes. The school had been successful, for example, in achieving a gold award as a Health Promoting School and two green flags from Eco-Schools Scotland. Pupils were also very actively involved in enterprise and Fairtrade activities and had played a prominent part in organising annual conferences for pupil councils in the Hamilton area. These and other similarly rich experiences allowed pupils to develop successfully their confidence and sense of citizenship. All pupils and staff were involved in extensive fundraising for local, national and international charities.

The school had made very good progress overall in addressing the priorities set out in its improvement plan. Significantly, these had included improvements in pupils' learning experiences and achievements, and measures to strengthen approaches to promoting inclusion and equal opportunities.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were very good. Teachers knew pupils very well. Activities and teaching approaches were closely matched to pupils' learning needs. Pupils with additional support needs were very well supported by staff. The headteacher coordinated a very effective range of support for pupils which included useful contributions from support staff, a visiting learning support teacher and a range of other professionals. The school's well-organised systems assisted teachers in identifying pupils' needs and monitoring their progress. Well-considered individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were in place to support the learning of a small number of pupils. These set out appropriate learning targets which were regularly updated by teachers and discussed with parents. Pupils for whom English was an additional language were making very good progress in their learning. The school had in place a number of stimulating activities which offered good opportunities to challenge higher-achieving pupils.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	The school had in place very effective arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. Staff were sensitive to individual pupils' social, emotional and physical needs. They had a clear understanding of child protection and anti-bullying procedures and knew what to do in the event of concerns. Staff had developed a strong sense of teamwork and worked together very effectively together to provide well-judged support for pupils. Pupils felt safe in the school and were confident that they could discuss any problems with staff. Staff set very high standards for pupils' behaviour and there was mutual respect among pupils and teachers. Older pupils supported younger pupils very well. The school had a very successful commitment to health promotion. Staffing arrangements to monitor pupils in the playground at breaks were effective in ensuring safety and good behaviour. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils into P1 from pre-school and from P7 to John Ogilvie High School were positive and very effective.
Management and use of resources and space for learning	The overall quality of accommodation was good. There was sufficient space across the school for teaching and storage. Teachers had access to a suitably wide range of resources to plan and deliver learning experiences. They made effective use of these resources and available spaces to provide a

	<p>variety of learning activities, including play and the use of computers. Pupils and staff had access to an ICT suite and additional computers were accessible in the central corridor. Access for those with restricted mobility was good and there was effective external security. An attractive garden area had been created in a corner of the central playground space. Standards of cleaning and maintenance were high. The temporary use of part of the building as a decant facility placed pressures on areas such as the hall and the ICT suite and on traffic management outside the school.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The atmosphere, climate for learning and quality of relationships in the school were very good. Morale was high and staff worked very well together. Pupils, parents and staff were proud of the school. Staff had appropriately high expectations of pupils' behaviour, attendance and achievements. They were helping pupils to develop similarly high expectations of themselves. Pupils' behaviour was exemplary. High-quality displays of pupils' work and wider achievements were a prominent feature of the communal areas in the school. Assemblies provided regular opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating achievement. The local parish priest supported the school very well. The school had highly-developed approaches to promoting equality and fairness at home and abroad through, for example, its engagement with the Fairtrade movement. Pupils had a very good understanding of religious and cultural diversity, including faiths other than Christianity, and the need to combat racism. There were regular appropriate opportunities for religious observance through assemblies and special masses which promoted a community of faith.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>The school placed considerable emphasis on involving parents, carers and families in their children's learning and the life of the school. Parents were supportive of the school. Many had, for example, helped with the school's very successful Golden Jubilee celebrations. They received regular, helpful information about the work of the school and about their children's progress. The headteacher regularly sought the views of parents and acted upon the feedback she received. The school consulted parents appropriately about sensitive health education issues. The Parent Council was actively involved in the life of the school. The school had strong links with the wider community and the local</p>

	parish. Pupils benefited from the strong links established with John Ogilvie High School and the wider learning community.
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7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Peter's Primary School provided pupils with a very high quality of education. Pupils were well motivated and eager to learn. Their behaviour was exemplary. They were attaining high standards in English language and mathematics and achieved success across a wide range of other areas. Arrangements for supporting pupils' learning, including those with additional support needs, were very good. Staff had appropriately high expectations of pupils. Teaching was of a high standard overall and teachers were well supported by classroom assistants and other support staff. The school had a strong capacity to continue to improve.

The headteacher provided very effective leadership. She had a clear vision for the school and was highly regarded by pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. She was highly committed to improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences and achievements. She had initiated many improvements and successfully engaged staff in taking leading roles in a number of key developments. The school had well-established approaches to ensuring continuous improvement. Staff, working with the headteacher, carefully monitored the progress of individual pupils. They had used national guidance to help evaluate the work of the school and to identify priorities for improvement. There was a very strong commitment among staff in the school to improvement through self-evaluation. There remained some scope for greater use of the performance information provided by the education authority. Teachers valued the opportunities to observe and learn from each other's practice and this was having a positive impact on pupils' learning experiences.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- develop further the opportunities for pupils at P1 to P2 to learn through play;
- extend the use of information and communications technology to support pupils' learning across the curriculum; and
- continue to promote reading for pleasure among pupils at all stages.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Nick Pepin
HM Inspector

2 September 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	very good
Improvements in performance	very good
How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs	very good
How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	excellent
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good
Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

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
satisfactory	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"> The school explained how they could help with homework. There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Staff showed concern for their children's care and welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no significant issues.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers listened to what they had to say. The behaviour of pupils was good. Teachers were good at letting them know how their learning could be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was effective communication between senior managers and staff. Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment. They liked working in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no significant issues.

Appendix 3 Good practice

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

Promoting and celebrating the school's Golden Jubilee

St Peter's celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2007. As a small school with a limited number of pupils, parents and staff, and pressures on accommodation, hosting a suitable event was a challenge. The school decided to use the Jubilee as an opportunity to focus on *Curriculum for Excellence* with a series of inter-disciplinary projects. Partnership working with parents and the wider community was a priority. Following inputs from all, including pupils, each of the four classes chose a theme covering the past 50 years from fashion, education, special events and toys. The goal for each class was to stage a small exhibition for visitors to the Jubilee celebrations to enjoy. Indeed, fun and enjoyment were key elements in the work which played a big part in furthering the strong sense of pride in the school. Pupils were keenly involved in research, discussion and collaborative work across different areas of the curriculum. Additional activities included each class performing a dance, including 'St Peter's Scottish Country Dance', specially written by a friend of the school. Another was the special mass with the Bishop which included a Polish prayer to which all the pupils responded in Polish.

Healthy living

Some years ago staff became concerned that St Peter's pupils, as with many others in Scotland, were not as healthy or aware of health issues as they might be. A particular issue was the outcome of an assessment of P1 pupils' teeth. Following consultation with pupils, parents and staff the school involved pupils in initiatives designed to help them assume more responsibility for their own health. At the same time, parents were involved through a home/school target setting initiative. Parents became an integral part of ensuring that pupils, for example, only had fruit and water at breaks and took part in at least one active after-hours activity. Pupils signed up for a new 'Healthy Personality of the Month' scheme with personal goals and rewards. These initiatives proved very successful. They helped contribute not only to improvements in pupils' health, but also to their sense of being responsible citizens who could make informed choices.

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 Executive Director (Education Resources), 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, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>.

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Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>.

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Footnote

1. Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.
