

**St Blane's Primary School
Blantyre
South Lanarkshire Council**

17 June 2008

Contents

1. [Background](#)
 2. [Key strengths](#)
 3. [What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?](#)
 4. [How good are learning, teaching and achievement?](#)
 5. [How well are pupils' learning needs met?](#)
 6. [How good is the environment for learning?](#)
 7. [Leading and improving the school](#)
- [Appendix 1 Indicators of quality](#)
[Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses](#)
[Appendix 3 Good Practice](#)
[How can you contact us?](#)

1. Background

St Blane's Primary School was inspected in March 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, representatives of the parent teacher association (PTA) 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.

St Blane's Primary School is a denominational school serving the town of Blantyre. It forms part of the John Ogilvie Learning Community. At the time of the inspection the roll was 253. Just over a quarter of the pupils attended the school from outwith the designated catchment area as a result of parental placing requests. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

The education authority, as part of its school modernisation programme, was building a new replacement school which would open at the start of session 2008/2009.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The broad range of learning experiences across the curriculum, and the focus

on developing pupils' wider achievement.

- 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 commitment to promoting healthy living amongst pupils.
- Active involvement of parents in their children's learning and very effective links with local parishes and the wider community.
- Leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of staff in improving experiences for pupils.

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

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents, pupils and staff were very positive about the school. Almost all parents thought that their children enjoyed school and that staff encouraged them to work to the best of their ability. They thought staff made them welcome and that the school had a good reputation in the local community. They thought that teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment. A few wanted more information on the school's priorities for improvement. Almost all pupils enjoyed school and thought that teachers explained things clearly. They thought the school helped them to keep safe and healthy. They enjoyed having a say in how to make the school better and felt that staff knew them well. A significant minority did not think that the behaviour of a few pupils was good. Staff were very positive about the school. They thought that communication amongst staff was effective and that they had good opportunities to be involved in decision making. They enjoyed working in the school and thought it was well led.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall quality of the curriculum was very good. It was structured effectively to promote pupils' skills of citizenship, enterprise and creativity within an impressive range of stimulating learning experiences. Teachers were developing links between curriculum areas to ensure learning was relevant and based on meaningful contexts. There was a strong emphasis on pupils' personal and social development. At all stages, health education and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle were very well developed. Staff made effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum. Pupils benefited from two hours of physical education (PE) each week. Pupils at P6 and P7 were learning Spanish. Teaching for effective learning was very good. Teachers used a wide range of approaches to suit the individual needs of pupils. They explained the purposes of lessons clearly and built effectively on pupils' prior learning. They made very skilful use of questions to help pupils think for themselves and to develop their understanding. They ended each lesson with a helpful review of what had been learned. Teachers provided consistent and very effective feedback to pupils on how to improve their learning. Praise was used effectively to encourage pupils and develop their self-esteem. Homework was purposeful and suitably challenging.

Pupils were well motivated and interested in their learning. They kept on task and applied themselves well. From P1 to P3, pupils had very good opportunities to learn from each other and collaborate in their learning through well-planned active learning. At all stages, pupils had regular opportunities to work together on group tasks. They responded very well to opportunities to plan their own learning and to taking responsibility for managing tasks. Across the school, for example, pupils had been investigating buildings and structures whilst they observed their new school being built. They were developing very effective skills in self and peer evaluation. Pupils were able to give each other constructive feedback, for example, on writing tasks and class presentations. The pace of learning was consistently brisk and purposeful and enabled pupils to make very good progress. Pupils had a very good understanding of what they needed to do to improve.

The school had taken very good steps to promote pupils' wider achievements. An attractive and comprehensive range of displays throughout the school helped to recognise and celebrate pupils' achievements, both within and outwith class. Pupils at all stages were encouraged to be active and participate in health-enhancing exercise through a range of after-school and lunchtime sporting activities. The school had been successful in achieving a silver award for being a health promoting school. Pupils had demonstrated their understanding of the environment by achieving an Eco-Schools Scotland Green Flag award. They were involved in a number of effective measures to protect the environment such as their recycling activities. They were developing increased confidence through participation in school shows, drama productions, reading and singing for audiences in church and at assemblies. Pupils were encouraged to participate in local and national competitions and had achieved considerable success in poetry, athletics, swimming, tae kwon do and chess competitions. Pupils were successfully developing good citizenship skills through their involvement as playground monitors and by serving on the health promoting schools and eco group committees. The school had further developed the pupil council to include class councils which ensured pupils' active involvement in decision making in the school. All pupils were involved in an extensive range of charity fundraising activities. For example, during Lent, pupils had raised significant funds to support charities such as Mary's Meals and SCIAF. Pupils were gaining a greater understanding of international education through links with a school in Malawi. Pupils at P7 had successfully developed their team working, confidence and personal skills in outdoor adventure activities during their week-long stay at an outdoor residential centre earlier in the session.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good. In recent years, attainment levels had shown steady improvement. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking and reading and most were achieving these in writing. A significant number had achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Several pupils with additional support needs in English language were making very good progress in their learning. Almost all pupils listened well for information and were able to listen to texts and to respond appropriately to these. They talked with confidence and were keen to share their views. Pupils enjoyed reading and most read widely for enjoyment. They read fluently, with expression and had good comprehension. From P4 to P7, pupils were able to express their opinions on books they had read. Across the school, pupils wrote regularly for a broad range of purposes and audiences and were making very good progress in developing their writing skills. At P6 and P7, pupils wrote

confidently at length. Pupils showed good understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The standard of presentation of pupils' work was very good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good. Standards of attainment had remained consistently high in recent years. Almost all pupils were attaining appropriate national levels of attainment. Across the school, a significant number were attaining these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Overall, pupils were making very good progress from their prior levels of attainment. At all stages, pupils were able to interpret information from a range of graphs. They had undertaken class surveys and were able to collate, interpret and display the information accurately. Across the school, pupils used ICT effectively to support their learning in mathematics. Pupils were confident in mental and written calculations. By P7, pupils showed good understanding of fractions and percentages. A few were less secure in calculations involving decimals and measurement. Pupils could identify a range of two- and three-dimensional shapes and describe their properties. By P7, pupils had a very good understanding of angles, bearings and coordinates. At all stages, pupils were confident and skilled in their use of problem solving strategies.

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. They ensured that activities and teaching approaches were closely matched to pupils' learning needs and abilities. Pupils with additional support needs were very effectively supported by staff. The school's well-organised systems assisted teachers in identifying pupils' needs at an early stage. Working with teachers and support staff, the depute headteacher coordinated a very effective range of support for pupils. Pupil support assistants were deployed very effectively and provided valuable additional support to pupils. Staff worked well with a range of professionals in supporting the learning needs of pupils. Well-developed individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were in place to support pupils' learning. They set out appropriate learning targets which were regularly updated by teachers and discussed with parents. Pupils for whom English was an additional language and those who were looked after by the education authority were making very good progress in their learning. Staff had put in place well-developed approaches to address the needs of higher achieving pupils.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	The school's arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils were very good. Staff were sensitive to individual pupils' social, emotional and physical needs. They had a clear understanding of the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures. Staff had developed a strong sense of community and worked very effectively as a team to provide highly appropriate and well-judged support for pupils. Pupils felt safe in the school and were confident that they could discuss sensitive issues with staff. Staff set high standards for pupils' behaviour. Older pupils supported younger pupils very well. Pupils suffering a bereavement or loss were well supported in the 'Rainbows

	<p>Group'. The school had a strong commitment to health promotion, which included a focus on exercise and healthy eating. Transfer arrangements from pre-school to P1 and from P7 to John Ogilvie High School were supportive and very effective.</p>
<p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p>	<p>A new school building was due to open at the start of the session in 2008/09. Despite limitations in the accommodation, staff had worked very hard to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment for pupils. Classrooms were well furnished and staff used additional rooms appropriately including, for example, ICT, a library, drama and music. Staff made very good use of all available space although pupils had to go outside to access parts of the building. Staff and pupils had access to a wide range of appropriate resources to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. Due to building restrictions, the school had no current provision for ICT in classrooms. The building was very dark in places and the temperature was variable. Access for those with restricted mobility was limited. The school did not have changing rooms for PE. Security arrangements were appropriate.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The climate for learning, overall atmosphere and quality of relationships in the school were outstanding. Staff worked very well together and morale was high. Pupils, parents and staff showed great pride in their school. Relationships amongst staff and between staff and pupils were of a very high standard. Pupils behaved very well and were a credit to the school community. They responded very well to the award schemes which were in place. Staff expectations of pupils' behaviour, attendance and achievements were excellent. Pupils were developing high expectations of themselves. Assemblies provided regular opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating achievement. Both local parish priests supported the school very well. All staff were strongly committed to promoting the school as a community of faith. The school had well-developed approaches to promoting equality and fairness throughout the school. Pupils had a very good understanding of religious diversity, including faiths and cultures other than Christianity. Pupils spoke confidently about racial equality and cultural diversity.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>The school placed a very strong emphasis on involving parents, carers and families in the work of the school. Parents were very supportive of the school and were frequent visitors to school events. They received regular, good quality information about the work of their school and about their children's progress. The skills of individual parents contributed positively to pupils' learning. For example, parents were regularly involved in supporting pupils' learning in class. Parents were kept very well informed about the curriculum through a range of helpful information leaflets, regular newsletters, curriculum workshops and open events. The headteacher regularly sought and acted upon the views of parents. The school consulted parents</p>

	appropriately about sensitive health issues. The Parent Council and PTA were actively involved in the life of the school. The school had strong links with the wider community including local businesses and both local parishes. Links with John Ogilvie High School and the associated primary schools were very strong.
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7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Blane's Primary School provided very high quality education for its pupils. Pupils were well motivated and very well behaved. They were attaining high standards in English language and mathematics and were achieving very well in a broad range of areas. The school's arrangements for supporting pupils' learning were very good. Expectations of pupils and the engagement of staff in the life and work of the school were excellent. The school had the capacity to ensure ongoing improvement.

The headteacher provided very effective leadership. She demonstrated a clear vision for the school and was highly respected by pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. She was highly committed to improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences and achievements. The headteacher set very high expectations of all staff and provided very effective support and challenge to help them continue to improve. Leadership across the school was very good. The depute headteacher carried out her responsibilities very effectively and provided very strong support to the headteacher. She regularly worked alongside teachers to support pupils and to bring about improvements in learning and teaching. A principal teacher was fully involved in improving the work of the school and carried out her responsibilities very well. Her teaching was a model of best practice. Working together with staff, the senior management team had fostered high quality teamwork with clear benefits to learners. The school had well-developed approaches to ensuring continuous improvement. Staff carefully monitored the progress of individual pupils. They had used national guidance to evaluate the work of the school and identify well-judged priorities for improvement. Teachers valued the opportunities to observe and learn from each other's practice. This had helped to bring about consistently high quality experiences for pupils.

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:

- continue to develop the use of information and communications technology and build on recent improvements and existing good practice in learning and teaching.

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.

Lesley R Brown
HM Inspector

17 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	very good
Teaching for effective learning	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
Improvement in performance: English language	very good
Improvement in performance: mathematics	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	Adequate
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	Excellent
Expectations and promoting achievement	Excellent
Equality and fairness	very good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good
Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	very good

Improvement through self-evaluation	very good
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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"> • Staff were caring and children enjoyed school. • Staff made them feel welcome and were responsive to their concerns. • The school provided stimulating and challenging work and set high standards for pupils. • The school was well led. 	<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"> • They enjoyed school. • Teachers expected them to work hard and told them when they had done something well. • Teachers explained things clearly and they had a say in how to make the school better. • The school helped them to keep safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of a few pupils.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff liked working in the school. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • Standards set for pupils' behaviour were consistently upheld. • Pupils were enthusiastic about learning and their success was regularly celebrated. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
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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.

Pupils' Involvement in Learning

In 2003, the school's self-evaluation showed that pupils were not sufficiently well involved in their own learning. Feedback from pupils indicated that they were not given enough opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. The school took the following steps to act on the feedback and improve this aspect of their work.

As part of the *Assessment is for Learning* programme, teachers were involved in joint professional development with staff from John Ogilvie High School. They reviewed a range of strategies and focused on ways that would engage pupils more actively in their learning. They introduced success criteria for tasks and supported pupils to review their work using the criteria. Staff also focused on improving the quality of feedback to pupils to ensure that they developed a clear understanding of their strengths and next steps in learning. As a result, pupils had a much greater understanding of their role in the learning process and readily took responsibility for aspects of their learning. They also recognised that they could learn from and support each other. Pupils had also been involved in self and peer assessment which had helped them to improve their own learning and that of others.

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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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@spsos.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: <http://www.spsos.org.uk/>.

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Footnotes

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