

St Athanasius' Primary School and Nursery Class, Carluke

South Lanarkshire Council

24 June 2008

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1. Background

St Athanasius' 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, 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 paren¹.

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

St Athanasius' Primary School is a denominational school serving the town of Carluke and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 224, including 34 children in the nursery class. At the time of the inspection the school had been decanted to temporary premises while work was underway on a new school building on the original school site. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for 16 weeks.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The clear rationale and design of the nursery curriculum.
- The quality of children's progress in communication and language in the nursery and

pupils' attainment in English language.

- The staff's commitment to the care and welfare of pupils and to the wider life of the school.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop leadership qualities and skills.

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 appear in [Appendix 2](#).

Overall, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the work of the school. All felt welcome in the school and reported that they received helpful information about their children's progress. Almost all thought that their children were happy at school. Parents of nursery children were satisfied with the quality of education and care provided for children. They felt staff knew their children well and responded appropriately to their individual needs. Almost all pupils were satisfied with all aspects of the school. All liked that they were told when they had done something well. All pupils 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, in particular the school's effectiveness in dealing with bullying, the celebration of pupils' successes and the care and welfare of pupils.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Overall, the quality of the curriculum in the school was good. In the nursery class it was very good. Nursery staff provided a suitably broad and balanced curriculum across all aspects of learning. In the primary classes, the curriculum was appropriately broad and balanced and mainly based on local authority guidance. There was an over-reliance on commercial text books. Additional time had been added to English language and mathematics. This required more focused monitoring. The school had appropriately prioritised the development of active learning across the school. Pupils had timetabled access to a computer suite for skills development in information and communications technology (ICT). The school provided appropriate physical education for two hours per week for all pupils. Staff were developing work to take forward enterprise, health promotion and Eco-Schools Scotland status. The quality of teaching across the school was good, with some examples of very good teaching where pupils were involved in active learning. Almost all teachers were well organised, gave clear explanations and used questioning effectively. Across the school, the sharing of the purposes of lessons and the identification of measures of success were inconsistent in their effectiveness. In a few cases, feedback to pupils was too general to be helpful.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was adequate. Pupils were confident, attentive most of the time and related well to each other. Most could work conscientiously on tasks with minimal teacher supervision. Pupils were beginning to use personal planners and were able to take some responsibility for aspects of assessment. There were examples of successful collaborative learning but this was not yet established throughout the school. Too often pupils were engaged on activities which were not sufficiently stimulating or challenging. Pupils were mostly provided with appropriate tasks, but more could be done to

make the learning experiences of higher-achieving pupils more challenging. Children in the nursery class were confident and enthusiastic and were making good progress across the curriculum. Children had insufficient opportunities to experiment and investigate during play activities. Due to the condition of the outdoor play area children were unable to have access to outdoor energetic play.

Since his appointment, the headteacher had introduced a number of opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and leadership. These included the formation of an active pupil council, the creation of houses with house captains and the formation of an eco committee with pupil and staff members. Pupils' successes in class were marked by star awards, presented at the weekly assembly. Pupils were involved in a wide range of sporting activities and took advantage of in-school and after-school clubs. Pupils at P6 were involved in a technology challenge which involved liaison with a teacher from Holy Cross High School. Staff in the nursery class had developed good relationships with children and used praise well to celebrate their achievements and raise their self-esteem. They interacted positively with children but did not consistently make effective use of questions and discussion to extend their learning.

English language

Children's progress in language and communication in the nursery class was very good. Almost all children were confident when talking to one another and to adults for a range of purposes. Most enjoyed listening to stories and a few were able to predict what was happening in the story. Most children experimented with mark making in writing and many were writing their name. In the primary classes, the overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good. The school had been successful in meeting the expected national attainment levels in reading and writing consistently over a number of years. A significant minority of pupils attained such levels early particularly at P2. Some pupils at P6 and P7 were capable of attaining still higher levels. Pupils' progress in listening and talking had yet to be assessed and collated systematically. Evidence from teachers' planning and from work in the classroom indicated that pupils were making appropriate progress. They talked with confidence, expressed personal views and listened attentively to teachers' explanations and instructions. Almost all pupils read fluently and older pupils could discuss their favourite authors and their enjoyment of reading. They could, for example, confidently discuss the structure, content and imagery of a poem. Across the school, most pupils wrote well for a variety of purposes. Written work was well presented.

Mathematics

In the nursery class, children were making good progress in developing their early mathematical skills. Almost all children were able to sort and match by colour, shape and size. Most could count to ten confidently and recognise numbers. They knew the days of the week. Some were developing an understanding of mathematical language. Overall, children needed more opportunities to explore mathematical concepts in a play situation. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. In recent years the overall level of attainment had been consistently high. Almost all pupils were attaining appropriate national levels. At P2, almost all pupils had achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Many pupils from P3 to P7 were capable of achieving appropriate levels of attainment earlier. Pupils at P1 and P2 were making good progress in developing numeracy skills. Across the school, they had little experience of information handling and were not secure in this aspect of mathematics. Most performed well in written and mental calculations and were confident in money and measurement. At P4 and P7, most pupils were knowledgeable about the properties of two- and three-

dimensional shapes. Pupils lacked confidence in using ICT to support their learning. Throughout the school, pupils were developing effective skills in problem solving and could discuss appropriate strategies with confidence.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Overall, the school's arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were adequate. In the most effective lessons teachers matched tasks and activities well to the needs of groups and individuals. Many activities were not sufficiently challenging and tasks were not well matched to pupils' learning needs. In mathematics in particular, there was an over-reliance on routine completion of textbook pages and worksheets. Classroom assistants were not deployed effectively enough in some classes to assist pupils with their learning. Staff had started to involve pupils in developing personal learning plans and setting targets for learning. The support for learning teacher had been very recently appointed. More needed to be done to establish staged intervention programmes for those pupils with identified support needs. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) and support plans were used appropriately to ensure pupils with additional learning needs made progress in their learning. The quality of meeting learning needs within the nursery was good. Staff knew children well and provided them with a range of interesting learning experiences. They made observations of children at play and used the information appropriately to identify next steps.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	The quality of care, welfare and development was very good. Staff knew pupils well and there was a caring, positive atmosphere in the school. Child protection arrangements and training to support these were appropriate. Pupil complaints were dealt with by the headteacher or depute headteacher. A suggestion box for the pupil council in each classroom was well used by pupils. Appropriate arrangements were in place for supporting looked after and accommodated children. Pupil absence was monitored and appropriate action taken when required. The headteacher had recognised health and safety issues in the school playground and had taken positive action to ensure pupils' safety. The decant situation resulted in most pupils being brought to school in buses, and careful arrangements had been put into place to manage this arrangement safely. The school had ensured that anti-bullying practices were in place and relationships among pupils were good. The school had prioritised achieving Health Promoting School status and pupils were very aware of good practice in healthy living. Staff in the nursery class provided children with a healthy snack and ensured they brushed their teeth daily. Detailed transition arrangements between nursery and P1 and between P7 and entry to St Aidan's High School were in place.
Management and use of resources and space for learning	At the time of the inspection, the school was in temporary accommodation while a new school was being built. Staff, with the support of the authority, were managing the situation well.

	<p>The quality of the temporary accommodation was good. Teachers used space effectively for learning and teaching although they could make better use of the quiet rooms between main class areas. A dedicated space for active play had been established next to the P1 to P3 classes. An attractive library area had recently been set up for whole school use. Pupils benefited from a small ICT suite. More required to be done to use ICT in classrooms to support learning but the decant building facilities limited this. There were secure entrance arrangements. Staff made effective use of displays to provide an attractive and stimulating environment in the entrance and corridor areas of the school. The janitor and cleaning staff kept the building clean and in good order. The uneven surface of the outside area meant that children from the nursery were unable to access the nursery outdoor play area at the time of the inspection. The school was accessible for users with mobility difficulties but there was no disabled toilet facility.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>Staff had created a positive atmosphere for learning and relationships between staff and pupil were very good. Almost all staff had suitably high expectations of pupils' wider achievements. Most had similarly high expectations of work rate and attainment. Pupils participated enthusiastically in the pupil council, an Eco committee and school houses. In-school and after-school clubs provided pupils with additional opportunities to achieve. Those at P6 were involved in a national technology competition. Throughout the school, pupils developed their awareness of good citizenship through their involvement in a range of charities. The school's approaches to equality and fairness were good. All children and pupils were treated fairly and equally. Pupils were respectful and tolerant of others. The personal and social development programme provided useful opportunities for understanding equality. The school religious and moral education and personal and social development programmes had opportunities for learning about other world religions and inter-personal relationships. The school was aware of the need to develop its approaches to promoting diversity. There were regular assemblies and 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 had succeeded in involving parents, carers and families in the life of the school. Parents received a written report on their children's progress twice a year and could contact the school to discuss progress at any point. They were kept informed about aspects of the curriculum through useful 'parent-prompt booklets'. Parents were well informed about the school's health education programme, including sensitive health issues. Staff provided workshops on aspects of the school's work such as literacy, numeracy and homework. The school invited parents to attend school assemblies when their children were to receive an achievement award. The active Parent Council was helping to involve local businesses in the</p>

	work of the school. Pupils benefited from a range of demonstrations and workshops which encouraged them to try different foods as part of a balanced diet. The school enjoyed positive links with the parish priest, community police and the Carluke Gala Day committee. Staff involved parents as helpers and provided a helpful information book to support their work in school. Parents were also active in organising the school's Family Fun Day. The PTA assisted with fund raising and parents ran the school football team.
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7. Leading and improving the school

[Appendix 1](#) provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

St Athanasius' Primary School and Nursery Class provided a caring environment for learning. Pupils were happy, motivated and well-behaved. They benefited from opportunities to achieve in a wide range of in-school and after-school clubs. The quality of teaching was good and staff were actively engaged in the life and work of the school. Pupils' performance was very good in English language and good in mathematics. There was room for improvement in the overall quality of pupils' learning experiences and the extent to which their learning needs were being met.

The headteacher had been in post for four months and was providing effective leadership to the school. He had a clear vision upon which to base improvements and had successfully gained the respect of staff, pupils and parents. He used his participative style of leadership to develop further the positive ethos in the school. The acting deputy headteacher and acting principal teacher had also been appointed recently and provided strong support for the headteacher. They were aware of the need to focus more closely on leadership for learning across the school. The acting deputy headteacher provided effective leadership to the nursery class and mentored two probationary teachers. The school's procedures for evaluating the quality of its work were adequate. In the nursery, staff had audited provision using quality indicators but had not yet gathered the views of parents and children. In the primary classes, the headteacher had conducted a parental survey in relation to homework. He monitored teachers' plans and provided written feedback. Teachers regularly evaluated their planning and teaching, but needed to be more focused in their evaluations. They would benefit from sharing good practice in teaching. Further work was required to develop more effective approaches to self-evaluation which would lead to improvements in pupils' experiences and achievement. Overall, the new headteacher and his staff, working with the support of the education authority, demonstrated a capacity to improve the school.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were four recommendations and no requirements. The recommendations have been addressed.

Main points for action

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

- improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences by making greater use of

meaningful contexts and active learning approaches;

- involve pupils more fully in reviewing their own progress and setting targets for improvement;
- meet the needs of all learners more effectively by addressing issues of challenge in tasks and activities; and
- develop further approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school with a clear focus on learning, teaching and achievement.

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.

Frank Adams
Managing Inspector

24 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	very good
Improvement in performance: mathematics	good
How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs	adequate
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	good
Equality and fairness	good
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 (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, 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. Where any one group had five or less responders then, in order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encouraged pupils to work to the best of their ability.• Explained how to support children with their homework.• Responded to matters of concern raised by parents.	<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">• Gave pupils a say in how to make the school better.• Helped pupils to improve their learning.• Kept pupils safe and healthy.	<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">• Involved staff in the decision-making process.• Made pupils enthusiastic about their learning.• Celebrated pupils' success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were no significant issues.

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. the above address.

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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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.
