

Lanark Primary School and Nursery Class South Lanarkshire Council

23 October 2007

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1. Background

Lanark Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in June 2007 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 progress, 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 School Board, 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.

The school serves an area of Lanark. It forms part of the Lanark Learning Community. At the time of the inspection the roll was 290, including 50 children in the nursery class. 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.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Links with the local community.
- The effective contributions made by staff to the care and welfare of 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.

Overall, parents were satisfied with the school's provision. Almost all felt welcomed into school and found parents' evenings helpful and informative. They were pleased with the high level of care and believed that their children were treated fairly. Most felt that the school was well led. Around a third of parents did not feel well informed about the work of the school or its priorities for improving the education of pupils. Nursery parents were satisfied with most aspects of the provision and were happy with the relationships between children and staff. However, there were concerns regarding the effectiveness of communication, notably in relation to children's progress and the work of the nursery. Some also expressed concerns about the quality of nursery facilities. Almost all pupils thought teachers expected them to work hard and told them when they did something well. They thought that their teachers knew them well and felt that the school helped them to be safe and healthy. Around half of the pupils felt that behaviour was not good. Staff felt proud of the school's good relations with the local community. They believed that they provided effective pastoral care for pupils. Almost all staff thought that they worked well together as a team and enjoyed working at the school. A significant minority of staff believed that the behaviour of a few pupils was not good and that indiscipline was not dealt with effectively. More than half the staff thought that the school was not well led and that senior managers did not work effectively as a team. Most staff did not feel sufficiently involved in developing the work of the school.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. Nursery children engaged in a sufficiently wide range of activities across the curriculum. The school provided a broad range of learning experiences across the P1 to P7 curriculum. Aspects of pupils' personal and social development had successfully been developed through the school's approaches to citizenship and enterprise in education. Staff allocated additional time to English language and mathematics but this had limited impact on raising attainment. The pace of pupils' work in these areas was too slow. All pupils received one session of good quality physical education (PE) per week. Additional physical activities, such as cross country running, Scottish country dancing and swimming provided increased time for PE for pupils in P4 to P7. A health week provided good opportunities for pupils to explore the importance of healthy lifestyles. Pupils were developing appropriate skills in information and communications technology (ICT), but had not yet used these skills across the curriculum. The overall quality of teaching was adequate. In the nursery, staff interacted well to support children in their learning but the deployment of staff across the two playrooms did not always allow staff to interact effectively to promote children's learning. Teachers in primary classes were well organised. They gave clear instructions and explanations but in a few lessons their explanations lacked depth. Questioning was not effectively used to assess pupils' understanding of what was being taught. Teaching approaches were not sufficiently varied. Most lessons were too teacher directed and did not build well on pupils' understanding and skills. Teachers were beginning to share learning intentions with pupils. Praise was used well in the nursery and in a few classes to build pupils' confidence.

Teachers' interaction with pupils was not always effective and in a few lessons, teachers found sustaining pupils' attention difficult. Homework was issued regularly but was not always sufficiently challenging.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was weak. In the nursery, children were making good progress in using programmable toys and computers. They observed the development of tadpoles and the growth of sunflower seeds. However, there were too few opportunities for children to explore and investigate. Whilst children spontaneously painted using their own ideas they were given insufficient opportunities to extend their skills through using a range of techniques and resources. Children particularly enjoyed dancing to Scottish music and a few shared their skills with others. They were able to tap a beat with musical instruments. They had daily opportunities to be energetic and showed skill in controlling wheeled toys. From P1 to P7 the level of challenge and choice of activities were not well enough matched to the learning needs of all pupils. Too many tasks were textbook based and repetitive. Pupils required more opportunities to be actively involved in their learning through investigative and practical activities. Pupils at the early stages required more opportunities to learn through play. Overall, the pace of learning was too slow and pupils were often unclear about what they were learning and why. They were not sufficiently clear about what they needed to do to improve their work. A few pupils at the middle and upper stages did not always show sufficient respect for teachers or for other pupils and this often interrupted the flow of lessons.

The school took some steps to help pupils develop their wider achievement. Across the school, most pupils were developing self-confidence and good social skills. In the nursery, children were confident and cooperated well with each other. They responded well to the ideas of others and persevered with their chosen activity. Pupils developed effective citizenship skills by taking responsibility for specific duties around the school such as playground helpers, classroom helpers, Junior Road Safety Officers and serving on the Eco committee and pupil council. They participated well in a range of activities during and after school including swimming, cycling proficiency, football and netball. A few pupils were making good progress in learning to play a musical instrument. The school promoted and celebrated pupils' wider achievements at assemblies. The annual residential experience for pupils in P7 provided good opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills.

English language

In the nursery, children were making good progress in communication and language. Many were able to engage in extended conversations with staff and each other. Whilst they listened and responded well to stories, they did not listen well within a larger group. Many children were keen to write and made marks throughout their play. Some could confidently write their name and were aware of initial letter sounds. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in English language was adequate. The levels of pupils' attainment had declined in recent years and showed no clear signs of improvement. The majority had achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. However, across all stages, most pupils were making slow progress in their coursework. There was considerable headroom for pupils to be achieving higher standards. Most pupils listened attentively and responded well to teachers' questioning. They were less able to listen and talk to each other in groups. At P6 and P7 pupils talked about their experiences and feelings and expressed their opinions about books they had read. At P4, pupils read aloud with confidence and responded well to what they had read. Many pupils read widely for pleasure and made regular use of class libraries. At all stages, pupils were becoming more confident and skilled in writing for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Mathematics

In the nursery, children were making good progress in early mathematics. They could identify simple shapes. They were able to match objects using simple puzzles and enjoyed discussing size through a familiar story. Some children were able to count confidently and identify numerals. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. Over the last three years, levels of pupils' attainment had been variable but had not shown improvement. Most pupils had attained appropriate national levels in mathematics but a significant minority of pupils were capable of achieving more. At P1 to P3, pupils had made a good start to developing numeracy skills and by P3 all pupils had attained appropriate national levels of attainment. However, these early gains were not maintained as pupils progressed through the school, particularly at P6 and P7. Pupils not attaining national levels were not making sufficient progress towards individual targets set. Most pupils could interpret information from a range of graphs and had experience of gathering, analysing and displaying data. Pupils in P7, for example, displayed information on aspects of Europe using bar graphs. Pupils at all stages showed a good understanding of basic skills in handling numbers and money. Most pupils from P2 to P7 demonstrated good skills in written calculations but mental calculation was too slow. Pupils across the school were confident in identifying two and three dimensional shapes. By P7, pupils were not sufficiently secure in their knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages. Pupils at all stages were aware of how to use a range of strategies to solve problems and made good attempts to use these.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's approaches to supporting pupils' learning were adequate. Arrangements in the nursery to support children's learning were not well developed. Staff had begun to make improved use of observation notes and children's ideas to plan for future learning. Nursery staff were not fully aware of recent legislation designed to support children who required additional assistance with their learning. Teachers were aware of the range of pupils' needs and worked with support staff to provide relevant learning activities. They did not always ensure, however, that tasks and activities provided appropriate pace and challenge for the majority of pupils. Pupils were not sufficiently clear about how to improve their learning and levels of attainment. In most lessons, teaching groups were too large to support pupils' individual needs effectively. The visiting learning support teacher provided good support for pupils. She liaised effectively with teachers and provided them with professional advice on learning and teaching. Together they coordinated the use of individualised educational programmes (IEPs). Although these were at an early stage of implementation they were helping pupils achieve success and make progress in their learning.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school had good arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils in school and children in the nursery. Staff knew children and pupils well and paid good attention to supporting their social and emotional needs. In the school, approaches taken to create a climate of mutual trust and respect were not always effective and strategies for dealing with low level challenging behaviour required to be reviewed. Staff effectively implemented the school's approaches to dealing with any incidents of bullying. The

	<p>school's procedures for responding to child protection issues were appropriate and well understood by staff. Pupils knew what to do if they had any concerns and could raise issues through the pupil council and suggestion boxes. Staff applied efficient procedures for the administration and management of medication. Good arrangements were in place to support the induction of children into P1 and the transition of pupils in P7 to Lanark Grammar School. However, there were insufficient approaches in place to support children entering the nursery.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation was adequate. Classrooms were bright and spacious, and examples of pupils' work were attractively displayed in classrooms and throughout the school. Additional rooms were well used as work areas for teachers and for group work. The gym hall provided good space for PE and space for whole school assemblies, music and drama. The school had an appropriate security system and well-organised arrangements for the reception of visitors. Playground areas were large and used well by pupils. A separate hall was used as a dining area. The school's arrangements for pupils having packed lunch required review. The nursery class was accommodated in a portacabin which required redecoration in some areas and new furnishings and fittings. The entrance area was congested and did not provide an attractive waiting area for parents. Aspects of the school building were in need of refurbishment. There was limited disabled access to part of the school.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The nursery had a warm atmosphere and relationships between the staff, children and parents were positive. The school provided a caring environment for pupils. Pupils were proud of their school and almost all wore school uniform. Relationships among most staff and pupils were positive but there was scope for improvement. Staff's expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour were not always sufficiently high. A few pupils did not show respect for teachers or other pupils and this interrupted the overall quality of learning. Teachers did not always make sufficiently clear to pupils the quality of work expected or set appropriately high standards. The promotion of equality and fairness featured in the school through the curriculum but was not always evident in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils showed a good awareness of religious diversity and at all stages they could identify key characteristics of other world religions. Regular assemblies provided good opportunities for celebrating pupils' achievements and for pupils to worship together. Standards of pupils' behaviour and attention at assemblies were not sufficiently high.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school had established good links with parents, the School Board and PTA but partnerships with parents in the nursery were not sufficiently well developed. A few parents helped in classrooms and on educational outings. Parents were given clear advice on supporting their children's learning through homework. They were consulted on sensitive aspects of the health education programme. Pupils' annual progress reports provided good information for</p>

	parents. School newsletters were too infrequent and were not sufficiently informative. Communications in the nursery were not always timely and did not fully encourage parents' involvement in children's learning. The school did not provide parents with information about the school's achievements over the year and did not involve them in reviewing its practice. The School Board supported the work of the school and the PTA regularly raised funds. The school had very strong links with the community including other local schools. Pupils participated in a range of local events including a Burns competition and the annual 'Lanimers' celebrations in the town.
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7. Leading and improving the school

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

Lanark Primary School provided a good standard of pastoral care for pupils. However, there were substantial inconsistencies in the quality of learning and teaching across the school and the needs of pupils were not always met. Staff did not have high enough expectations of pupils' achievement and a significant number of pupils were capable of achieving more. There were major weaknesses in aspects of school management and administration which had caused ongoing difficulties between senior management and staff. The education authority had been involved in regular meetings with the headteacher and staff representatives to address a range of issues but too many remained unresolved. The school had established good links with parents and productive partnerships within the community. The school's capacity to improve, without substantial support from the education authority, had major weaknesses.

The headteacher had been in post for nine years. She was committed to the care and welfare of pupils and to developing links with the local community. She had established positive relationships with some members of staff, pupils and parents. However, the headteacher had not gained the confidence of most of the staff. The school lacked strategic direction and change and had not been managed well. The headteacher had not yet demonstrated the leadership necessary to bring about improvement. A number of challenging situations had not been handled well resulting in continuing long term difficulties between staff and the headteacher. The deputy headteacher and principal teacher required clearer remits to ensure that responsibilities for improvement were clearly defined. They were committed to the work of the school but did not work effectively as a team. The school did not have systematic approaches for monitoring and evaluating its work and staff were not given feedback on their classroom practice. Approaches to tracking individual pupil progress were unreliable. Staff were not sufficiently involved in improving the work of the school.

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

At the last Care Commission singleton inspection there were six recommendations. Two had been met and the others were ongoing through the local authority.

Main points for action

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- the quality of learning and teaching;
- the quality of children's learning in the nursery in knowledge and understanding of the world and expressive and aesthetic development;
- pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics;
- assessment procedures and meeting children's learning needs in the nursery;
- approaches for monitoring learning and teaching and tracking pupils' progress;
- communications with nursery children's parents on children's progress and the work of the nursery;
- involving staff in evaluating the work of the school and contributing to the school improvement plan; and
- leadership.

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Belinda Sheehan
HM Inspector

23 October 2007

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?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	weak
Pupils' attainment in English language	adequate
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate
How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate
How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	good
Accommodation and facilities	adequate
Climate and relationships	adequate
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	adequate
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	good
Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	unsatisfactory
Leadership across the school	unsatisfactory
Self-evaluation	unsatisfactory

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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided a safe and stimulating environment.• Showed good concern for the care and welfare of all.• Involved parents in supporting their children's learning through homework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide more information on their children's progress and on the work of the school.• Consult parents more on decisions which affect their children.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers checked homework.• Teachers expected them to work hard and praised them for doing well.• Staff helped them stay safe and healthy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the behaviour of a few pupils.• Treat all pupils fairly.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided a high level of care for pupils.• Had built up a good reputation in the local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve communication.• Work more closely together to discuss school priorities.• Provide more effective leadership.

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/>.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

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 Unit, 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.