

Primary School Inspection
A Report by HM Inspectorate of Education

St Kenneth's Primary School
East Kilbride

South Lanarkshire
19 April 2005

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1. Background

St Kenneth's Primary School was inspected in January 2005 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 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 School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents.

St Kenneth's Primary School is a denominational school serving the area of East and West Mains, Kittinghly and Stewartfield in East Kilbride. At the time of the inspection the roll was 532, including 50 in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was consistently above the national average. The school had had a high level of staff absences over the past two years.

The nursery class was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Very good relationships between staff and the polite, courteous pupils.
- Hard working staff who provided high quality pastoral care.
- Links with local businesses and the wide range of events organised by the PTA.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, 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](#).

Almost all parents felt welcomed by staff and thought their children enjoyed being at the school. They believed staff treated pupils fairly and showed concern for their care and welfare. About half the parents thought that the school buildings were not kept in good order and that the toilets and playgrounds were in need of maintenance and upgrading. Most parents thought that the school was well led and that communication and information sharing could be improved. Pupils enjoyed school, got on well with one another and were praised by staff when they did something well. The majority of pupils thought that pupils' behaviour was good and most felt that they were treated fairly.

Teachers thought they communicated clearly to parents about the high standards of attainment they set for pupils. Some staff thought that communication between senior managers and themselves could be more effective. The majority of staff felt that issues related to pupils' behaviour could be dealt with more effectively. Support staff would like improved training opportunities and to be more involved in decision making.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum provided a broad and balanced experience for all pupils. It included new programmes of study in technology and science, and good attention to developing skills in information and communication technology (ICT), and Spanish at P6 and P7.

Teachers made some good use of computers, for example, to develop pupils' word processing skills and use of spreadsheets. However, the school recognised that staff did not use computers regularly enough to support and extend pupils' learning across the curriculum. Teachers had recently revised the school's policy on discipline.

Teachers needed to develop pupils' talking and listening skills, and monitor their progress and learning needs more effectively. Overall, the quality of teaching was good.

Teachers gave clear instructions and explained the purposes of lessons well to pupils.

They interacted positively with pupils and used praise effectively. Teachers were implementing new approaches to improving pupils' learning in mathematics and reading. There were good examples of interactive mental mathematics lessons across all stages. Teachers taught pupils in a variety of groupings, as a whole class and as individuals. They provided good feedback to them on how to improve their writing.

At P6, pupils were given clear guidance on what they were expected to learn in environmental studies. This good practice needed to be shared across the school.

Teachers provided pupils with regular homework.

The quality of pupils' learning was good. Almost all pupils were motivated and enthusiastic in their learning. In the best lessons the pace was brisk, pupils listened attentively and responded well to questions. Pupils accepted responsibility for aspects of their learning and were developing skills for working together in small groups. For example, at P6, pupils co-operated well in pairs to identify numbers written in Spanish. At P5, pupils independently researched a science topic using reference books and the internet. However, pupils' skills in working together in groups were not developed consistently across the school.

At all stages, pupils were developing a good awareness of their responsibilities to themselves and to one another. They had developed responsible attitudes towards group leader tasks assigned to them by class teachers. Pupils were given responsibilities and opportunities to make decisions within the pupil council and had chosen to raise funds for charity. At the upper stages, pupils participated in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including badminton, football, athletics and dance. The buddy and house captain systems enabled pupils to develop good relationships and to provide good support to other pupils. Staff's positive approach to discipline had improved consistency in the management of pupils' behaviour. They actively promoted healthy lifestyles and pupils had become more aware of the need for healthy eating and exercise. Pupils brought credit to themselves and their school by successfully gaining their first Eco School flag. They had achieved a gold award for their participation in enterprise activities and a silver award in a mathematics challenge.

English language

The quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good overall. In recent years, attainment levels had fluctuated. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and most were achieving these levels in listening, talking and writing. A few had exceeded these levels. Most pupils were making good progress in their coursework. However, higher attaining pupils learned at too slow a pace for them to be suitably challenged. Almost all pupils listened carefully and were good at following instructions. At P7, pupils talked about their experiences and feelings and expressed opinions about texts they had read. Some pupils read widely for pleasure and all pupils at P3 to P7, made regular use of the school library. At all stages pupils wrote well for a wide range of purposes and audiences. Pupils presented their written work neatly and showed a good level of knowledge about language.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Over the last three years levels of attainment had fluctuated. Almost all pupils at P3 and at P5 to P7, had attained appropriate national attainment levels in key aspects of mathematics. At P4, most pupils had attained these levels. There were good examples of interactive mental mathematics lessons across all stages. Most pupils were developing good skills in mental arithmetic and written calculations and had a good understanding of information handling. However, the activities and pace were not consistently challenging for higher attaining pupils and at times tasks were too repetitive. At P2, pupils were developing a good understanding of numbers. Most pupils at P5 to P7 were able to solve problems effectively and to explain the strategies they had used.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Staff gave very good attention to ensuring pupils' welfare. They showed a high level of care for pupils and were alert to their needs and circumstances. Staff had received training in child protection and implemented guidelines appropriately. The school had clear procedures in place for managing bullying, racism and the administration of medication. Staff encouraged pupils to eat healthily and to participate in physical activity. Pupils felt confident that they could approach staff with concerns and that staff would take action to support any problems as they arose.

Class teachers gave useful help to individual pupils who experienced some difficulties in their learning. In some classes, teaching groups were too large to support pupils' learning needs, especially in mathematics. Teachers did not take sufficient account of pupils' individual needs when selecting activities and resources. Staff needed to share and review identified targets more regularly to ensure support for learning was effectively targeted. Well-managed Records of Needs and productive links with other support agencies ensured good support for pupils. Pupils who spoke English as an additional language were supported effectively by the visiting specialist teacher and were making good progress. The school had helpful procedures to support pupils entering P1 and those transferring to secondary school.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Overall, the quality of accommodation was fair. The main entrance and temporary classrooms were bright and welcoming. Staff had created attractive displays of pupils' work to recognise their achievements and improve the inside of the building. However, water from the leaking roof and windows had caused considerable damage to the interior. A risk assessment should be undertaken to improve health and safety issues related to traffic and parking. The toilet facilities were adequate but in need of refurbishment. The playground surfaces were uneven and large puddles restricted pupils' play. A ramp provided access to the ground floor of the school for those with mobility difficulties.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Almost all pupils identified strongly with the school and wore their school uniform with pride. Overall, relationships amongst staff, parents and pupils were very good. Pupils behaved well and were praised by staff. However, staff expectations of pupils' attainment were not yet consistently high enough. The school had developed a race equality policy. Pupils who spoke English as an additional language were well integrated in the school. The policy for equal opportunities was due to be reviewed to further promote pupils' understanding of diversity. Pupils learned about other world religions. Many pupils benefited from the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school organised weekly assemblies that provided appropriate opportunities for the celebration of achievements and religious observance.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Staff encouraged parents to be partners in their children's learning through regular workshops on aspects of the curriculum, such as sensitive health issues. The school provided parents with helpful reports on pupils' progress and regular newsletters. Staff planned to revise the homework information for parents. The well-established School Board gave very good support to the school. The PTA regularly organised social events and raised funds to enable the school to develop its range of resources. The school had good links with the wider community and regularly raised funds for charity. Local businesses supported enterprise projects and outings and the parish priest made regular visits to the school. Pupils developed responsibilities and citizenship through their participation in the Eco schools initiative. Pupils, parents and staff had worked effectively together to develop a wild-life garden.</p>

7. Improving the school

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

At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent on sick leave. There were two deputy headteachers. The local authority appointed the deputy headteacher of the early years as acting headteacher, leaving a vacancy. The education authority had provided guidance and practical support, for example by providing some temporary supply teachers to cover staff absences. Parents appreciated the positive ethos of the school but remained concerned about the unresolved staffing issues and information provided by the school. The acting headteacher had been in post for two months and was fully committed to the day-to-day management of the school. She prioritised class cover, as staff absence levels continued to be high, and had improved continuity and progression for two classes by deploying the deputy headteacher and acting deputy headteacher to teach those classes full-time. However, the absence of the headteacher and the vacancy for a deputy headteacher had had an adverse effect on the quality of learning and teaching. Overall, the quality of leadership was fair.

The acting headteacher and senior management team had worked hard to improve communication and staff morale. However, work was still required to ensure improvements in learning, teaching and meeting pupils' needs. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher had monitored teachers' plans and provided staff with detailed feedback. However, approaches to monitoring learning and teaching and tracking pupils' progress were not sufficiently focused on improving pupils' experiences and attainment.

In order to effect change and improvement, education authority officers need to continue to work in close partnership with this school to improve leadership, staffing and arrangements for quality assurance.

Main points for action

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

- pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics by ensuring that the pace of learning and level of challenge is sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils;
- monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, the attainment of pupils and the quality of learning and teaching;
- the quality of the accommodation;
- staffing; and
- strategic leadership of the school.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. 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 and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

19 April 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community

We judged the following to be fair

- Meeting pupils' needs
- Accommodation and facilities
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be unsatisfactory

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoyed being at the school. • Staff made them feel welcomed in the school. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children and treated them fairly. • Pupils and teachers respected each other and the school had a good reputation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fabric and maintenance of the school buildings. • Clear information about the school's priorities for improving education. • Leadership and level of staffing.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were given the right amount of homework and teachers checked it regularly. • Teachers expected them to work hard. • They were helpful and praised them when they did something well. • They enjoyed being at the school and got on well with one another. • Teachers knew them well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' behaviour. • Being treated more fairly. • How to get help when upset.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good relations they had with the local community. • The enthusiastic pupils. • The high standards of attainment they set for pupils. • The celebration of pupils' successes. • The mutual respect between themselves and the pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of pupils' behaviour. • Communication with senior managers and involvement in decision making. • Leadership.

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Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk

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