

**Overtown Primary School  
North Lanarkshire Council  
13 January 2004**

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## **1. Background**

Overtown Primary School was inspected in October 2003 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 and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and pupils and to all staff. Information about responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2. Members of the inspection team also met the chair of the School Board and a group of parents.

The school serves the village of Overtown and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 189. The proportion of pupils entitled to free meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above national levels.

## **2. Key strengths**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Well behaved, courteous and enthusiastic pupils.
- Highly committed and conscientious staff.
- Sensitive and effective support for pupils' emotional, physical and social needs.
- Strong partnership with the local community.
- The headteacher's positive relationships with pupils, parents, staff and the effective way she promoted a happy and attractive learning environment throughout the school.

## **3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff**

Parents, pupils and staff were very positive about the school. Parents felt that staff provided very good encouragement and levels of support for pupils. They also felt that the school had established

strong partnership with parents and the local community. Pupils liked school and felt safe in it. They thought that teachers expected them to work hard and that they received praise for their achievements. Staff enjoyed working in the school in a strong team approach. They felt that they set high standards for pupils' behaviour and attainment and showed concern for their care and welfare.

#### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

##### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

The school provided pupils with a broad curriculum that gave them good opportunities to develop a range of skills and knowledge. Pupils at P6 and P7 received additional learning experiences in German. The balance across the main areas of the curriculum was appropriate. Staff were currently improving the breadth of pupils' experiences in the expressive arts by introducing a new music programme. There was a very good focus on promoting pupils' personal and social development across all aspects of the curriculum. Recent rewiring had caused technical difficulties, and as a consequence, pupils had limited opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance their learning experiences.

The quality of learning and teaching was good with some very good features. Teachers had created attractive and stimulating classroom environments. They made effective use of direct teaching approaches and ensured that pupils understood the purposes of lessons. They encouraged pupils' contributions but, at times, needed to ask more demanding questions to challenge pupils further. Teachers made very good use of praise to motivate pupils and to build their confidence. Pupils responded positively by working hard and enthusiastically. Most were making good progress with classwork but some required a more appropriate pace of learning. Pupils were beginning to have regular opportunities to work co-operatively with others in a variety of learning activities across the curriculum. They demonstrated confidence in working as part of a team to reach solutions during problem solving tasks in mathematics. They had some good opportunities to be actively involved in science tasks. This good practice should be extended to include more varied and challenging tasks in English language and mathematics. The school had identified the need to link homework more purposefully to classwork.

Pupils were making good progress in developing self-esteem and confidence. They co-operated well with staff and with each other and were friendly and courteous. They contributed positively when given opportunities to make decisions about school life. The school provided an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including participation in community events, to encourage active citizenship. Pupils had successfully involved the local village in working with the school to gain an ECO award. Older pupils willingly accepted additional responsibilities, including showing care for younger pupils. During class visits, inspectors observed the following features of pupils' attainment.

- Pupils at P7 spoke confidently and enthusiastically in German about themselves and their families.
- Pupils at P6 demonstrated growing understanding of electrical circuits.
- At P4, in art and design activities, pupils were developing skills in sketching.

## **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. In recent years, the school had maintained standards of attainment in reading and there were signs of improvement in writing, particularly from P1 to P4. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. However, some higher attaining pupils should have been able to achieve even better standards. At all stages, pupils listened attentively and responded well to teachers' instructions and explanations. They were confident in describing experiences. P7 pupils expressed their ideas and opinions clearly and enthusiastically. Most pupils read regularly for pleasure and could discuss books they had enjoyed. In writing, pupils paid good attention to the presentation of their work and to improving punctuation and sentence structure. They had limited skills in writing at length and for various purposes.

## **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Over the past three years, the school had variable success in raising standards of attainment. By P3, almost all pupils had already achieved appropriate national levels. From P4 to P7 pupils' progress towards appropriate standards was slower. Most pupils achieved the expected levels. Across the school, pupils performed well in written calculations involving number and money. Most were confident in carrying out oral mental calculations and demonstrated sound knowledge of multiplication tables. They recognised 2D and 3D shapes but some lacked confidence in naming the parts and knowing the language of shapes. Pupils were able to interpret information presented in graphs but were not confident in carrying out surveys and displaying mathematical information. They were experienced in working together through sets of problem-solving and enquiry tasks. Pupils would now benefit from more challenging activities to help them make more informed choices from the range of strategies.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

Staff provided very good support for pupils' social, emotional and physical needs. They knew pupils well and dealt sensitively with matters relating to their care and welfare. The headteacher worked very well with partner agencies to ensure that pupils received appropriate support when required. The school had suitable procedures for dealing with child protection matters, bullying and for a range of health and safety issues. The school involved the community policeman, the school nurse and a home safety officer in delivering aspects of health education.

Class teachers, classroom assistants, special educational needs assistants and a range of visiting teachers provided good levels of support to meet pupils' individual needs. Class teachers at P1 to P3 used early intervention programmes to give younger pupils a sound start to developing early literacy skills. The school had clear arrangements for accessing additional support. A teacher was deployed to co-ordinate learning support arrangements. She carried out this role effectively and worked well with class teachers providing advice and materials. She and a visiting teacher of learning support provided additional support to individuals and small groups of pupils. The school should consider extending the range of ways that additional support is delivered. Pupils with an individualised educational programme (IEP) were making good progress towards their learning targets.

Pupils were well supported when they started school for the first time and when moving on to secondary school. These included effective systems for sharing information with nursery and

secondary schools and working with partner schools on curricular issues to help ensure continuity in learning.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Overall, accommodation was fair. The school building was well maintained and had recently been rewired. Access was adequate for the needs of all users. However, space was restricted throughout the building. Staff made very good use of the available space. Classrooms and corridor areas contained bright, attractive displays of pupils' work but there was limited space for pupils to move around during learning activities. A small main hall was used for dining and physical education. The building had no suitable additional work areas to support learning and teaching activities. It also lacked adequate storage and staff toilet facilities. Staff, pupils and parents had worked hard to enhance the school grounds with attractive murals and garden areas.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The headteacher and staff had successfully established a strong sense of community. The school had a happy, welcoming atmosphere and relationships among pupils and staff were very positive. Staff made good use of rewards systems and praise to reinforce expectations of pupils' behaviour and the quality of their classwork. Some pupils did not have sufficiently high expectations of their own achievements. Staff treated parents and pupils equally and fairly. The school enabled pupils to recognise and value aspects of religious diversity through its religious and moral education programme. The school had plans to introduce a race equality policy in keeping with advice from the education authority. The school provided regular opportunities for pupils to participate in religious observance.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school had very good relationships with parents and the community. Parents played an active role in school life. They supported the school by assisting with educational visits, extra-curricular activities and social events. The school communicated with parents in a range of ways to inform them of their children's progress and about aspects of the school's work. The headteacher had established very positive links with the School Board. The School Board was actively involved in school life and gave valuable support to it. The school made a strong contribution to the community and worked well with it. It participated in a range of local events and was currently supporting a local church work towards an ECO award.</p>

## 7. Improving the school

Overtown Primary School provided a bright and supportive learning environment in which pupils felt happy and secure. The headteacher and staff worked conscientiously to ensure that pupils had positive learning experiences. Overall, the school had maintained standards of attainment over the past three years. Pupils were making good progress with classwork but some could achieve more through an increased pace of learning.

The headteacher was open and approachable and involved staff in all aspects of the school's work. She had established very positive relationships with pupils, parents and staff. She had gained the full support of her highly committed staff. Together, they had developed a strong sense of teamwork and were enthusiastic to further improve the quality of pupils' experiences. To continue to raise pupil attainment, the headteacher should provide staff with clearer guidance on the curriculum, including programmes of study.

The headteacher and staff used formal meetings and informal discussions to consider aspects of the school's work. They had carried out an audit to help them evaluate the quality of the school's provision. The school did not make full use of this information to identify the most appropriate priorities in planning for improvement, including those that focused on raising attainment. Priorities set in an earlier plan had only been met to a limited extent, due mainly to staffing issues. Staff needed to monitor more rigorously their progress in implementing the school development plan. The headteacher reviewed teachers' plans and had taken steps to track pupils' attainment towards national levels. However, variable approaches to teachers' planning, and assessment and recording, had resulted in some weaknesses in monitoring pupils' progress. By making their approaches to self-evaluation more rigorous and systematic, the headteacher and staff will be well placed to further improve the work of the school.

The school and education authority should take action to ensure further improvement in the work of the school and to raise achievement for all its pupils. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- ensure an appropriate pace of learning for all pupils;
- extend the good examples of active learning and provide pupils with more varied and challenging activities in aspects of English language and mathematics;
- provide staff with clearer guidance on the curriculum, including programmes of study; and
- develop more rigorous and systematic approaches to self-evaluation.

### **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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Norma Wright  
HM Inspector

13 January 2004

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Partnerships with parents, the School Board and the community

### **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
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Leadership

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- Accommodation and facilities
- 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.

<b>What pleased parents and carers most</b>	<b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school had a good reputation in the local community.</li> <li>• Teachers were good at letting parents know about their children's strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• The school encouraged children to work to the best of their ability.</li> <li>• Staff made parents feel welcome in the school.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of children.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents wished to see improvements in aspects of communication and in the quality of the accommodation.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased pupils most</b>	<b>What pupils would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers praised pupils when they had done something well.</li> <li>• Teachers expected pupils to work as hard as they could.</li> <li>• Teachers checked pupils' homework.</li> <li>• All pupils were treated fairly.</li> <li>• The school helped pupils to keep themselves safe and healthy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils were very happy with their school and made no suggestions for improvements.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased staff most</b>	<b>What staff would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community.</li> <li>• Staff liked working in the school.</li> <li>• Staff showed care and concern for the care and welfare of pupils.</li> <li>• Standards set for pupils' behaviour were consistently upheld.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff made no suggestions for improvements.</li> </ul>

## **How can you contact us?**

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, 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: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at the above address. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Professor Alice Brown  
The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman  
23 Walker Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7HX

Telephone number: 0870 011 5378  
e-mail: [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk)

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