

**Errol Primary School
Perth & Kinross Council
18 October 2005**

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1. Background

Errol Primary School was inspected in June 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 met with representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), a group of parents and members of the local community. There was no School Board.

The school serves the village of Errol and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 84, with an additional 21 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Strong links with parents and the wider community.
- The school's commitment to promoting equality and fairness.
- The good progress in coursework made by pupils at the early stages.
- The headteacher's promising start in taking the school forward.

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.

Most parents and carers were positive about the work of the school. Almost all felt welcome in the school and thought that it was well led. All parents and carers thought staff treated their children fairly and showed concern for their care and welfare. They also felt that there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. A few parents were concerned about the condition of the school building and the effectiveness with which the school dealt with instances of inappropriate behaviour. Almost all pupils felt safe in the school and knew what to do if they were upset. They said their teachers checked their homework, explained things clearly and told them when they did things well. A

few pupils expressed concerns about the behaviour of others in the school. All staff liked working in the school and felt the school had a good reputation in the community. They felt teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment and that pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. However, a few expressed concerns about the quality of the accommodation and the way the school dealt with poor behaviour. They were also concerned about the leadership of the school particularly in relation to communication between managers and staff.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school's curriculum provided broad and balanced experiences for all pupils. Most teachers used additional time well to develop pupils' skills in mathematics and writing. Pupils at all stages participated successfully in well-planned enterprise activities which involved them in promoting their school within the community. Environmental studies topics were used well to provide cross-curricular work for most pupils. However, there was a lack of consistency in the programmes of work being used throughout the school, particularly in English language. The overall quality of teaching was good, with some examples of very good teaching. Teachers used praise effectively and gave clear explanations and instructions. They shared with pupils what they expected them to learn and, in most lessons, consolidated the main teaching points at the ends of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers used open-ended questioning effectively to challenge pupils to think for themselves. However, this approach was not used consistently across all stages. Homework relevant to current classwork was issued regularly and completed well by pupils.

Pupils enjoyed a good and sometimes very good quality of learning. Most pupils were enthusiastic about their learning and eager to please their teachers. They behaved well and worked hard on the tasks they were given. In the best practice, the pace of learning was brisk and pupils were actively involved. They were given challenging tasks which required them to collaborate with others and think deeply about issues. However, this practice was not consistent across the school, and in a few classes pupils were not always appropriately challenged. Pupils at the early stages participated enthusiastically and made good progress in drama and physical education activities. Pupils at the middle stages successfully acted out a drama which highlighted the importance of healthy lifestyles. A number of pupils at the middle and upper stages were benefiting from activities designed to help them improve their movement and co-ordination skills. Pupils at the upper stages were acquiring a good understanding of aspects of science such as friction and forces, and designed and carried out experiments effectively. A number of pupils at the middle and upper stages had worked well together to research and prepare high quality computer-based presentations on aspects of major world religions. At all stages most pupils worked well in environmental studies and presented examples of good cross-curricular work.

Pupils benefited from a range of activities which gave them good opportunities to work in teams and exercise responsibility. For example, all pupils had participated in a very good enterprise activity to promote and improve the school's reputation in the community. Pupils had used a range of skills to design, produce and distribute informative posters, leaflets and DVDs. In some classes, pupils successfully carried out responsible roles as class secretaries and monitors. Participation in a pupil council and

in 'buddying' schemes helped pupils to develop citizenship skills and show concern for others. Class lessons on moral issues helped pupils to strengthen their commitment to these concepts and develop an understanding of how to protect the environment. A very good after-school club was well attended by pupils.

English language

The quality of attainment in English language was fair. A majority of pupils were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, reading and writing, with most attaining national levels in talking. In the last three years attainment in writing had been low. However, there were signs of recent improvement. Overall, attainment in reading had declined this year. Almost all pupils at the early stages and most at the middle stages were making good or very good progress in the development of their literacy skills. Around half of pupils at the upper stages performed well in their coursework, but some were capable of learning at a faster pace. At all stages pupils listened well and responded enthusiastically to teachers' questioning. Throughout the school most pupils expressed their ideas clearly. They talked confidently to adults and to each other about a range of topics. At the early and middle stages most pupils read well and demonstrated a good understanding of the texts they were reading. At the upper stages most pupils read regularly for pleasure and a few were able to discuss aspects of books they had enjoyed. At the early and middle stages most pupils wrote well for a range of purposes. For example, pupils in P1/P2 wrote detailed instructions on how to make a model aeroplane. Pupils at the middle stages worked well in groups when planning an imaginative story. At the upper stages pupils' written work was limited and in a few cases pupils did not present their work neatly enough. In most classes pupils presented good examples of written work related to environmental topics.

Mathematics

The quality of attainment in mathematics was fair. The majority of pupils were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment. All pupils at the early stages, around two-thirds at the middle stages, but only around half at the upper stages were reaching these levels. Overall attainment levels had remained steady over the last three years. However, they were still below national levels. Pupils at the early stages were making very good progress in acquiring numeracy skills. At all stages pupils had a well-developed knowledge of shapes and good skills in drawing and interpreting graphs and charts. Calculation skills, including the ability to work with decimals, were not sufficiently well established by P7. Higher-attaining pupils at the upper stages had a good knowledge of problem-solving strategies and some skills in applying them. On the whole, however, pupils' problem-solving skills were not developed consistently well across the school.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The quality of pastoral care in the school was good. The school had appropriate policies and procedures for child protection and dealing with race equality issues. However, not all staff were familiar with the school's child protection procedures. Staff were sensitive and responsive to pupils' social, emotional and physical needs. Pupils understood that they could talk to any member of staff if they had any problems. Throughout the school, pupils felt safe and well looked after. They had access to water

throughout the day and were given healthy choices at lunch. Pupils in the upper stages supported younger pupils through a well-organised buddy scheme. Staff used a range of strategies to motivate pupils and reward positive behaviour. External speakers and agencies were used effectively to support the delivery of personal and social education programmes including drugs misuse and personal relationships.

The school's approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs were good. Tasks and resources at the early and middle stages were well matched to pupils' abilities and aptitudes. At the upper stages some tasks lacked challenge for a few pupils. Teachers and support for learning staff worked well together to meet the needs of a range of pupils who required additional support. Pupils with additional support needs were working well towards achieving broad learning targets set out in individualised educational programmes (IEPs). However, these targets needed to be more specific with success criteria clearly identified. The education authority's psychological services and other support agencies provided good additional support to both pupils and staff. Pupils' Records of Needs were well managed and kept up-to-date. The school had very good arrangements to support pupils at points of transfer from pre-school into P1 and from P7 into secondary.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The quality of accommodation was fair. The school was housed within six separate buildings which included outside toileting facilities and a separate administration block. There was a well-used small hall for whole school activities and a separate hutted dining room. Staff had been successful in ensuring that the environment was bright and stimulating. However, the temperature in most classes was difficult to control and adversely affected the pupils' learning environment. Security systems that allowed pupils access to all the buildings within the school were in place and appropriate. The education authority planned to build a new school with a scheduled opening date in 2008.

<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>Overall, the ethos of the school was good and almost all pupils were polite and caring towards one another. Staff and pupils worked well together and were proud of their school. The school had a positive and welcoming atmosphere which was conducive to pupils' learning. However, the morale of a few staff was low due to their reservations about communication within the school. Pupils expressed their views effectively through the pupil council and felt their opinions were valued. Pupils' work and achievements were displayed effectively throughout the school. There were regular opportunities for regular religious observance and learning about other beliefs and customs. Staff actively promoted a sense of fairness and mutual respect. Pupils with particular additional support needs were well integrated and involved in all class activities. Staff did not always have high enough expectations of pupils' attainment and behaviour in some classes.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and the community</p>	<p>The school had established very good partnerships with parents and the community. The headteacher communicated effectively with parents through a comprehensive school handbook and well designed newsletters. Parents were also consulted when sensitive health issues were being taught. Teachers met with parents to discuss their children's progress twice a year and parents received comprehensive reports on progress. Regular curriculum evenings provided useful information on the work of the school. A well-established PTA organised a wide range of activities throughout the year that fully involved the school and the local community.</p>

7. Improving the school

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

The school provided a good environment for learning. Staff supported children well and successfully promoted fairness and equality across the school. The quality of teaching was good overall and most pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. While attainment in English language and mathematics was fair, there were indications of improvement at the early and middle stages. Although a start had been made, much remained to be done in order to improve pupils' attainment overall.

The headteacher had been in post for a year. He had made a good start to taking the school forward. In particular he had built strong relationships with parents and the

community. The headteacher was beginning to build good relationships with staff and professionals. Staff had aired their concerns about internal communication through a recent audit on leadership. The headteacher had recognised the need to develop effective teamwork and communication across the school. The recently appointed principal teacher had already made a very positive impact on the work of the school.

Overall the quality of the school's approaches to self-evaluation was good. The headteacher had consulted with staff, parents and pupils about the quality of education within the school. All had been involved in using quality indicators to identify the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The school had produced plans for taking priorities forward. The headteacher had monitored teachers' forward plans and had given very good feedback to staff. Plans were in place to monitor learning and teaching across the school. However, this had not yet taken place. The school was beginning to show improvements in attainment at the early and middle stages. There was a need to extend the good practice evident at these stages across the school as a whole.

Main points for action

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

- improve pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics;
- ensure that approaches to monitoring learning and teaching are in place and improve consistency of practice across the school;
- ensure that all staff are fully aware of child protection procedures; and
- address accommodation issues identified in the report.

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.

Jane Lopez
HM Inspector

18 October 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents and the community

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be fair

- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Accommodation and facilities

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"> • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • Staff treated their children fairly and showed concern for their care and welfare. • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • The stimulating and challenging work set by the school. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school dealt with pupils' inappropriate behaviour. • The school buildings.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They felt safe and well looked after. • Teachers explained things clearly and told them when they did things well. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could, and checked their homework. • They knew what to do if they were upset and felt at least one teacher knew them well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of pupils.

What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set high standards for attainment, and pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. • The school maintained good relations with the local community. • They liked working in the school. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • There was mutual respect between staff and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between managers and staff, and teamwork among managers. • How indiscipline was dealt with in the school. • The leadership of the school.

How can you contact us?

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Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Acting Director of Education & Children's Services, 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, Wellgate House (Level 5), The Wellgate, Dundee, DD1 2DB or by telephoning 01382 224155. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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