

**Auchenlodment Primary School
and Nursery Class
Johnstone
Renfrewshire Council
7 October 2008**

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1. Background

Auchenlodment Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in May 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, members of the wider community and a group of parents¹ which included representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA).

The school serves the Johnstone Castle area of the town of Johnstone. At the time of the inspection the roll was 277, including 57 children in the nursery classes. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The strong commitment of all staff to the school.
- Innovative projects through which pupils had achieved success in a broad range of areas.
- Strong links with parents and the wider community which enhanced pupils' learning.
- Leadership across the school.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of P4 to P7 pupils, and to all parents and staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents of children in the nursery classes and of pupils at the primary stages expressed very positive views about all aspects of the school's work. In particular, they thought

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

that the school had a good reputation in the local community, that reports gave them helpful information about their children's progress and that the school was well led. Pupils were also very pleased with all aspects of the school. In particular, they felt that the school helped them keep themselves safe and healthy. In discussion with inspection team members, they stated that the behaviour of a small number of pupils was not good, but that the school dealt with these pupils fairly. Staff liked working in the school and felt it was well led. A few members of the support staff felt that aspects of communication could be improved.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The overall quality of the curriculum in both the nursery classes and at the primary stages was very good. In the nursery classes, staff provided children with a broad range of stimulating learning experiences. They provided frequent opportunities for pupils to learn through play with pupils in P1. Staff interacted well with children to support their learning. They made effective use of questioning and praise. At the primary stages, teachers had recently reviewed the time allocated to the different curricular areas to allow for inter-disciplinary work in line with the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Teachers regularly made good cross-curricular links such as setting mathematics in the context of the P7 trip to France. In drama, lessons were linked to the 'Standing Up to Anti-Social Behaviour' initiative which developed pupils' awareness of safety in the community. At all stages, pupils were benefiting from a range of innovative projects such as the health promoting and motivational schools initiatives and a range of enterprise in education activities. A very good range of outings and visitors provided a variety of interesting learning opportunities for pupils. At the primary stages, well-planned programmes for all the key curricular areas allowed pupils to make suitable progress in their learning. The programme in mathematics provided particularly high quality learning experiences for pupils. Teachers had recently improved the programmes for writing in English language and for personal and social development (PSD). In some English language lessons, there was scope for the work to be better linked to pupils' other learning experiences. Throughout the school, teachers made good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support children's learning. This was a particularly strong feature of teaching in mathematics. At the primary stages, teachers planned their lessons well. Most shared the purpose of lessons effectively with pupils, gave clear explanations and ensured that pupils worked at a good pace. In many lessons, teachers used a good variety of approaches, encouraged pupils to think about their learning through effective questioning and reinforced learning points well at the end. There were important weaknesses in a small minority of lessons where, for example, teachers did not allow pupils enough independence or did not ensure that pupils settled to their work.

In the nursery classes, children enjoyed their learning experiences. They showed independence and confidence in accessing resources and choosing activities. Most were able to concentrate on activities long enough to extend their learning. Children had begun to be involved in planning their activities with staff. At the primary stages, most pupils were well motivated and showed enthusiasm for learning. In many lessons, they were actively involved and responded well to opportunities to be independent and creative and to make choices. Pupils collaborated well in groups, for example in a P7

mathematics lesson where they worked effectively together to create graphs, and in a P6 English language lesson where they readily shared ideas for a writing task. Most pupils responded well to feedback from their teachers on how to improve their work. Pupils were proud of their achievements and appreciated having a say in decision making about the school. In a few lessons, pupils were not sufficiently motivated to complete the work they had been given.

Improvements in performance

Improvements in performance in the nursery classes and at the primary stages had been good.

Children in the nursery classes were making good progress in communication and language. Most were able to talk confidently, listen to and follow instructions and identify their name in print. Most children were developing good understanding of phonics. Most four-year-olds and a few three-year-olds were able to write their own names.

At the primary stages, pupils achieved good standards in English language. Pupils' achievements in reading and writing had shown considerable improvement over the last five years. Most pupils now attained appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. At the early stages, a significant number of pupils attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making suitable progress. Across all stages, most pupils were developing good skills in listening and talking through discussion of their learning in daily lessons in a range of curricular areas. Pupils at the upper stages were developing their skills in talking in groups and debating. Commendably, the school had identified the need to encourage greater enjoyment of reading for many of its pupils and was improving its library for this purpose. Pupils at all stages wrote for a variety of interesting and relevant purposes, sometimes well linked to other curricular areas such as science. A minority at the middle and upper stages needed to improve their handwriting and standards of presentation. Through an innovative project, pupils at the upper stages used their skills in English language to communicate important messages about health and safety in the community. They made presentations to younger pupils at assemblies and visited other classes to give talks on the theme of 'Standing Up to Anti-Social Behaviour'.

Children in the nursery classes were making very good progress in early mathematics. They could sort and match using colours and shapes. They could recognise numbers and enjoyed counting and doing simple calculations. Through a range of play activities, they were developing good skills in measuring.

In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Pupils' achievements had shown notable improvement over the last five years. Most pupils attained appropriate national levels and a significant number of pupils at the early stages attained these standards earlier than might normally be expected. The few pupils who had not attained appropriate national levels were making suitable progress in their class work. Across the school, pupils were developing very good skills in information handling. By P7, they could gather and analyse information very effectively and interpret a broad range of graphs. At all stages, pupils carried out

written calculations accurately. A daily whole-school mental calculation programme had increased pupils' confidence in using numbers. At all stages, pupils showed very good understanding of time. By P4, pupils had a sound knowledge of shapes and their properties. Across the school, pupils showed effective skills in using ICT for their work in mathematics. They were able to use a range of strategies to solve mathematical problems.

Children in the nursery classes were making good progress in understanding the world around them. They could describe life cycles of butterflies. They showed confidence in using the computer and the digital camera. Most children could throw and catch and enjoyed using the outdoor play equipment. They were developing good skills in painting, drawing and a range of craft activities. They used musical instruments to follow rhythms and could respond to music in simple dances. They participated well in role-play activities relating to the world of work.

At the primary stages, pupils showed very good skills in a range of activities in physical education, including street dance and circuit training. In drama, pupils at P4 successfully performed role plays linked to the theme of safety in the community in preparation for a school show. In health education, pupils at P3 showed good understanding of environmental issues. In French, pupils at P5/P6 were developing their knowledge of basic vocabulary for colours and clothes. There was scope for them to make more extended use of the language, for example to express likes and dislikes.

Children throughout the school were benefitting from the school's efforts to promote broader achievement. In the nursery classes, children were developing as confident individuals. They were able to follow rules and routines and were developing independence in a range of areas, for example personal hygiene. At the primary stages, pupils contributed effectively to the life and work of the school through serving on the pupil council, the eco school committee and the safe routes to school group. Pupils at all stages were successfully developing their knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, environmental issues and personal safety through the wide-ranging health promoting schools initiative. Most pupils at P6 and P7 had developed as responsible citizens by participating in the 'Standing Up to Anti-Social Behaviour' project. They had worked with staff from a range of services to learn about community issues such as fire safety and drugs awareness and had been awarded the status of 'junior wardens' in the community. The success of this project had been recognised at a special ceremony attended by leading national politicians. All pupils at P7 successfully took on responsibilities. For example, house captains had organised highly motivating whole-school events such as a talent show and a fashion show to raise money for charity. Through participation in the wide range of after-school clubs, pupils had developed their skills in areas such as sport and the performing arts.

The school had made good progress in implementing its plans for improvement. In particular, the progress made with improving the school's facilities for ICT and achieving the status of health promoting school had had a very positive impact on children's learning experiences throughout the school.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Strengths just outweighed weaknesses overall in the extent to which the school met children's learning needs. In the nursery class, staff made some observations of children's progress across key aspects of their development. They were not yet making enough use of this information to identify next steps in learning. Across the primary stages, staff worked hard to support pupils' learning needs. In most lessons, teachers were successful in meeting the needs of pupils through careful selection of a range of suitable tasks and resources. Play activities at the early stages met pupils' needs effectively. Classroom assistants and auxiliaries worked well with class teachers to provide support for pupils, both in class and with small groups and individuals. They provided effective support for pupils with social and emotional needs and for those who needed to improve their physical coordination. The school had established good links with a range of external agencies to support pupils' learning. The teacher for pupils with additional support needs had prepared personal support plans for pupils with particular needs to help them make suitable progress. She liaised regularly with teachers to help them plan for pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning. In a small minority of lessons, teachers gave pupils work which was not challenging or relevant enough to meet their needs. In a few cases, pupils' needs were not met because teachers' time was taken up dealing with the disruptive behaviour of a small number of pupils. Teaching and support staff and parent helpers were not always deployed fully effectively across the school to work with those pupils in need of support. At the time of the inspection, a small number of pupils with additional support needs arising from social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were not receiving the support they needed.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school provided a caring environment in which pupils felt safe and well looked after. Staff knew pupils well and were sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs. A good range of suitable policies guided and supported staff in ensuring pupils' care and welfare. Parents expressed very positive views on the school's approaches to the care and welfare of their children. Staff showed high levels of awareness of the school's policy and procedures for child protection. The headteacher kept meticulous records to support the needs of any children at risk. The school had recently gained health promoting school status. Staff and pupils were proud of all that had been achieved in this area, including the setting up of a breakfast club, improvements in lunch menus and work on safe routes to school. Pupils' personal and social skills were effectively developed through the recently-improved planned, whole-school programme and through good opportunities to take responsibility and achieve in a broad range of areas. Each term, the whole school focused on a particular aspect of PSD. Pupils had benefited from recent themes, including rules, rights, responsibilities and respect, friendships and 'be all you can be'. The school had very good arrangements for supporting children when they moved from nursery to P1. The school had good links with Johnstone High School to support pupils transferring from P7 to S1. For example, at P7, pupils took part in a project on healthy diet run by the Home Economics department which culminated in a visit to the high school to take part in a practical cookery lesson.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>Overall, the management and use of resources and space for learning was very good. The school had worked hard to provide a bright and welcoming environment with stimulating areas for learning. Teaching resources were in very good supply and were very well organised. In particular, resources for play and for ICT were plentiful. Staff made very effective use of all available space, including the many flexible areas for working with groups and individual pupils. High quality displays were well linked to on-going teaching and learning throughout the school. All classrooms had been fitted with interactive whiteboards and data projectors to support pupils' learning. Toilet facilities were maintained to a very high standard. Building security arrangements and access for those with restricted mobility were appropriate. Children in the nursery benefited from an enclosed play area and there was an extensive sports pitch. Parts of the school grounds had been developed to create attractive gardens and quiet areas.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	<p>Staff, pupils and parents were strongly committed to the school and very proud of its achievements. Staff supported each other well and made very effective contributions to the life of the school. In the nursery classes and at the primary stages, relationships between almost all pupils and staff were positive. Almost all staff had high expectations of pupils' behaviour, achievement and attendance. Pupils responded well to the school's wide range of very effective arrangements to promote and reward good behaviour and recognise achievements. Regular assemblies provided good opportunities for religious observance and to share successes. The school had very good systems for predicting and monitoring pupils' achievements, with the aim of ensuring that they achieved their full potential. Pupils with additional support needs and those from a range of ethnic backgrounds were very well integrated into the life of the school. Pupils and their parents felt that all children were treated fairly in the school. All staff had received training on equality issues and further consideration of key issues such as sectarianism was planned. Pupils had opportunities to develop a good understanding of equality issues through their lessons in PSD and religious and moral education. Staff worked very hard to provide an environment in which all felt included.</p>

Aspect	Comment
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school involved parents and the local community very well in its work. The Parent Council had made a positive start to supporting the work of the school. The very active PTA regularly organised a range of successful fund-raising events. Monthly newsletters kept parents well informed about the life and work of the school. The school had a very good website and 'blogs' about the work of P1 and P7 provided additional opportunities for parents to find out about their children's work. Reports to parents about their children's progress were detailed and gave helpful information. School events were very well attended by parents and the local community. The headteacher had successfully involved parents in developing the school's homework policy. Parents appreciated the very good transition arrangements from nursery to P1. The school had an open door policy at all times and most parents felt issues were dealt with straight away. A good number of parent helpers supported pupils' learning at all stages of the school. A community learning and development officer ran a successful class for parents from Poland to assist them in learning English. The school's very strong links with the local community had enriched pupils' learning. The 'junior wardens' project was a notable example of the school's success in linking with the community.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Auchenlodment Primary School and Nursery Class had many strengths. Pupils were well cared for and encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. A very good curriculum, including some innovative inter-disciplinary projects, and good overall teaching standards, supported pupils' learning and achievements. Attainment was good in English language and very good in mathematics. The school's approaches to meeting pupils' needs were satisfactory overall. The headteacher, working with the education authority, needed to ensure that the needs of all pupils were fully met. The commitment of staff and the effective leadership at all levels indicated the school's sound potential for continued improvement.

The headteacher had a clear vision for the school. She was very hard-working and strongly committed to the school. At a time of high turnover of staff, she had taken a number of effective measures to improve staff motivation and teamwork and to develop leadership at all levels. She had won the strong support of parents and staff and had developed very strong partnerships with the local community and partner agencies which enhanced children's learning across the school. Under her leadership,

attainment had improved and the school had coped well with an increasingly wide range of needs amongst its pupils. The school had also supported pupils' families very well. The headteacher had successfully introduced a number of initiatives to enhance pupils' learning experiences and help them achieve in a broad range of areas. The deputy headteacher was knowledgeable about pupils, staff and parents. She had successfully led improvements in the nursery and at the early primary stages. She provided effective support to staff in managing pupil behaviour. The two principal teachers had brought new areas of expertise to the school, notably skills in ICT. Both were very effective teachers and had successfully led priorities in the school improvement plan. Promoted staff worked well as a team to support staff and children's learning. Other members of staff had also successfully taken on leadership roles, for example in the areas of health promoting schools and enterprise education. The school had a good range of methods for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement. Most teachers reflected regularly on their practice with a view to improving pupils' learning. Staff had carried out a range of audits and had asked parents and pupils to complete questionnaires. As a result, they had then taken some effective action to improve aspects of the school's work. In the current session, the headteacher and her deputy had not been able to carry out fully the planned programme of monitoring teaching and learning owing to staff absence. In addition, they had required to spend a disproportionate amount of time supporting the small minority of pupils with particular social, emotional and behavioural needs. As a result, they had not been able to give sufficient emphasis to identifying and sharing good practice, with the aim of ensuring greater consistency of learning and teaching across the school.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice. The one requirement and three recommendations arising from the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery classes had been addressed.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take account of the need to:

- maintain high attainment in mathematics and continue to improve attainment in English language and other curricular areas; and
- ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Jane B Renton
HM Inspector

7 October 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	very good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Children's experiences (nursery classes)	good
Learners' experiences (primary stages)	good
Improvements in performance (nursery classes)	good
Improvements in performance (primary stages)	good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs (nursery classes)	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs (primary stages)	satisfactory

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	very good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	very good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

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 with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	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"> • The school had a good reputation in the local community. • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • School reports gave them helpful information about their children's progress. • The school encouraged their children to work to the best of their ability. • The school was well led. 	<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"> • Pupils had a say in decision making about the school. • Teachers were good at letting them know how their learning could be improved. • The school helped them keep themselves safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant minority did not agree that the behaviour of pupils in school was good.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and support staff liked working in the school. • Pupil success was regularly celebrated. • The school was well led. 	<p>A minority of support staff did not agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there was effective communication between senior managers and staff; • they had opportunities to be involved in decision making; or • there was regular discussion about how to achieve school priorities.

Appendix 3 Good practice

In the course of the inspection, the following example of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

Links with the community

The school wanted to build on its strong and positive reputation in the community and was fully involved in taking forward the Johnstone Castle Regeneration Strategy. As part of the local community team, the school had taken the lead in a project entitled 'Standing Up to Anti-Social Behaviour' as part of which pupils became junior community wardens. In the current session, the school had secured additional funding from the Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service in order to develop the project further. Pupils in P6 and P7 had benefitted from working with agencies such as *Local Counselling for Alcoholism* and *Pupils as Carers*. Through these links, they were learning how to lead safe and healthy lives. In addition, they had given presentations to other classes in the school, to pupils at another school and to parents and carers. The current session's activities were due to culminate with a school drama production supported by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service and the local Rotary Club. Pupils were also benefitting from contributing to the Johnstone Festival Gala Day Display, highlighting their work in the community.

How can you contact us?

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Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education and Leisure, 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.

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