

14 May 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Gilmerton Primary School
The City of Edinburgh Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including writing, physical education and emotional health and wellbeing. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Most children enjoy learning. The school's focus on cooperative learning is developing the majority of children's ability to work in groups. Children enjoy planning outings to view the work of great Scots, including David Livingston. Through the school's links with Malawi, children are learning about the lives of others. In most lessons, children understand the purpose of the activities and what they are supposed to learn. They need more involvement in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement, including setting targets for their learning. Attractive displays throughout the school illustrate children's wider achievements. Children contribute well to various initiatives in the community, such as high-quality work on the 'Conference of the Birds'. Through this exciting expressive arts project organised in partnership with Edinburgh University, many have developed their confidence and team-working skills. They enjoyed performing for other children and their parents in school, and for the wider public at the Botanic Gardens.

The majority of children achieve well in literacy and numeracy. They can discuss their learning. However, they need to develop confidence when talking in front of their peers. Across the school, children's skills in listening are not well-developed. By P7, most read well. Within the last year, children's progress in writing has been significant. In mathematics, most children know about addition and subtraction and apply their skills when solving mathematical problems. Others have a good understanding of how to work out measurements of specific areas. The school has correctly identified the need for children to improve their number skills, including in mental calculations. Children would benefit from applying numeracy skills in real-life contexts, including in financial management. At all stages, most children understand how to respond to other children and manage conflict, particularly in the playground. They are

developing helpful skills to deal with emotions through 'Creating Confident Kids' and 'Roots Of Empathy' work. Children now need to develop their understanding of other aspects of health and wellbeing. Children are making good progress in art and design and religious and moral education.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

The school works hard to be inclusive. Staff are improving how they support children to develop and learn. Working with staff, the headteacher has correctly identified the need to improve children's experiences. Over the last year, appropriate measures have been taken to improve teaching programme for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Children benefit from well-planned experiences in art and design. They enjoy two hours of good-quality physical education each week. Children need more regular experiences in science, technology and Information and Communications Technology. The school needs to take forward plans to ensure that children receive a broad general education. This should start with staff agreeing consistent approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy to ensure that all children make suitable progress. Children need more experiences which help them make connections and links in their learning. Most staff encourage children to make choices and use their interests when planning topics. Overall, most teachers give clear explanations and set activities at an appropriate level of difficulty for children. Together with support for learning and visiting specialist staff, the school supports effectively children who need extra help with learning. The school has positive relationships with parents and other partner agencies to help children requiring assistance. Children's needs are carefully looked at through appropriate transition arrangements which help children when they start P1 or move to secondary education.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

Over the last school session, the headteacher has been working successfully with staff, children and their parents to improve the quality of the school's work. Staff are pleased that they can share good practice with each other, and at times with colleagues in other schools, through cluster developments. Staff, children and their parents report that under the supportive and helpful guidance of the headteacher, the school is improving children's learning and achievement. Children are now more active in their learning and improvement plan priorities have made a significant difference to the quality of children's writing. Staff are more confident in using Curriculum for Excellence guidance. We have asked the headteacher to continue to work with staff and children to ensure a consistently high quality of learning across the school. Reviewing the roles and remits of school managers would help with this. Staff need to improve how they assess and track children's progress, including in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to ensure that they make suitable progress. We have asked the school to consider a wider range of methods for seeking the views of parents, with the aim of further developing parents' role in school improvement.

This inspection of your school found the following key strengths.

- Progress made in children's writing.
- Support for vulnerable children and their families.
- Impact of the leadership of the headteacher.
- Teamwork of staff and their commitment to improving the school.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Develop children's listening skills across the school.
- Develop Curriculum for Excellence, starting with further improvement to the programmes for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Improve systems to assess and track children's progress.
- Review the remits of school managers to assist in further school improvement.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. With support from the local authority and Education Scotland the school will be able to make the necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer along with the local authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.


HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/GilmertonPrimarySchoolEdinburghCity.asp> .

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**Gracemount Primary School
City of Edinburgh Council
10 October 2006**

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1. Background

Gracemount Primary School was inspected in June 2006 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 the Eco School committee, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, and a group of parents¹, which included representatives of the Parents' Association.

The school serves the Gracemount area of south-east Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection the roll was 416, including 56 children in the nursery class. The school had achieved Eco School status. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

The work of the nursery class was not included in this inspection.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Positive and supportive relationships amongst staff and polite and friendly pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to be involved in decision-making and improving the school.
- Support for pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning at the early stages, and for pupils with English as an additional language.
- The effective start made by the headteacher to improving the school.

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

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.

Parents were pleased with most aspects of the school's provision. In particular, they felt that their children enjoyed school and that staff made them feel welcome and showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. They thought that the school was well led. They were concerned that the school had been subject to vandalism and a number of break-ins. They were unhappy that the theft of laptop computers had adversely affected their children's learning. Pupils expressed positive views about the school overall. In particular, they thought that all pupils were treated fairly and that pupils had a say in deciding how to improve the school. All staff enjoyed working in the school and thought it was well led. Teachers felt that pupils were enthusiastic about learning and that there was regular discussion about how to achieve the school's agreed priorities for improvement.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school provided pupils with an overall broad and well-balanced curriculum. Pupils' learning experiences in French, health education and science were enhanced by strong links with the neighbouring secondary school. Pupils were benefiting from the introduction of a new programme of study in mathematics and a whole school initiative related to enterprise education. Educational excursions, including residential, outdoor education experiences, and a wide range of visitors to the school also enhanced pupils' learning. A notable and successful innovation was the course in thinking skills for pupils in P2. The school's ability to develop pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) had been seriously impeded by the theft of laptop computers earlier in the session. In several areas, such as listening and talking in English language, environmental studies and religious and moral education, teachers did not always plan or assess pupils' progress systematically to ensure continuity and progress in learning. The school needed a clearer rationale for teachers' use of flexible time to ensure that it was used effectively to meet pupils' learning needs. The quality of teaching across the school was too variable. Strengths just outweighed weaknesses overall. A few examples of very good teaching were observed. In these cases, teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils, made effective use of questioning to extend their learning and provided them with a variety of stimulating activities. This good practice now required to be in place at all stages. Across the school, most teachers had positive relationships with their pupils, gave clear explanations and used praise effectively to motivate pupils. However, in too many cases, teachers did not explain the purpose of lessons or activities to pupils. Overall, there was scope for improvement in teachers' questioning of pupils and in the range of teaching approaches adopted. In a few cases, teachers were not sufficiently prepared for lessons. Tasks set for homework were not sufficiently varied.

Most pupils worked well and showed good motivation and enthusiasm for learning. In several lessons, pupils contributed well to discussions and collaborated effectively with

each other. For example, in an English language lesson, pupils in P6 worked well in pairs to write expressive poems. In a thinking skills lesson, pupils in P2 were actively involved and made very good progress in their learning. A group of pupils from P1 participated enthusiastically in a board game which successfully developed their knowledge of phonics. Overall, however, pupils were not active enough in, and did not take enough responsibility for, their learning. The pace of learning was too slow in a number of lessons and pupils were often too passive. In a few lessons, for example music and physical education in P7, the disruptive behaviour of some pupils had an adverse effect on the quality of learning.

Pupils at all stages achieved success in a broad range of areas. They successfully took on responsibilities such as membership of the pupil council and the Eco School committee or as junior road safety officers. There were high levels of participation in the varied range of sporting and fitness activities on offer such as dance, yoga, judo and “mini-kickers” which developed skills in football. Pupils had recently achieved success in city-wide sporting competitions in football and athletics. Pupils were developing their citizenships skills through regular fundraising for a range of local and international charities. The Eco School committee actively promoted pupils’ awareness of environmental issues and organised a weekly collection of waste paper. All pupils had recently taken part in a week of sponsored activities to raise funds for improvements to the school grounds. The pupil council had successfully involved all pupils in deciding what improvements needed to be made.

English language

There were important weaknesses in pupils’ achievement in English language. An improving trend in national attainment levels in reading from 2002-04 had not been sustained in 2005-06. National attainment levels in writing had improved over the last five years. Overall, the majority of pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing. In P2, around half of the pupils had attained the appropriate level earlier than might normally be expected. Less than half of the pupils in P7 attained appropriate levels in writing. Pupils for whom English was not their first language were making good progress in their learning. Across the school, most pupils talked confidently. Pupils in P5 gave interesting presentations to their classmates on their achievements. Those in P7 talked confidently about their road safety competition at an assembly. By the upper stages, there was scope for pupils’ skills in group discussion to be better developed. Although most pupils showed good listening skills, a minority did not listen well in lessons. Most pupils enjoyed reading. Pupils in P6 participated enthusiastically in a book sharing project. Those at the early stages were developing good skills in early literacy. Overall, pupils’ skills in talking about texts were insufficiently developed. Pupils at all stages wrote for a wide variety of interesting purposes. Some pupils, including the majority of pupils in P7, needed to improve the content, structure and presentation of their writing.

Mathematics

Strengths just outweighed weaknesses in pupils’ achievement in mathematics. Overall, there had been an improving trend in national attainment levels over the last five years. Almost all pupils at the early stages, most at the middle stages and the majority at the upper stages achieved appropriate national levels of attainment. In P2, most pupils had attained the levels earlier than might normally be expected. By P7, only half of the pupils had attained appropriate levels. Pupils could interpret bar and line graphs and were able to carry

out surveys. Their ability to display mathematical information, including the use of ICT, was less well developed. Throughout the school, most pupils demonstrated good skills in written calculation. In P1, pupils were making good progress with their early number skills and worked confidently with numbers up to 20. At the upper stages, pupils' skills in mental calculation were not well enough developed. Pupils were aware of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes but showed less confidence when working with angles. Although they were aware of a range of strategies for solving mathematical problems, too few pupils were able to apply these strategies independently.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The school had effective procedures for ensuring pupils' care and welfare. Staff knew pupils well and took account of their social and emotional needs. Suitable arrangements were in place for child protection, including regular training for staff. Procedures for ensuring appropriate administration of medicine and associated record keeping needed to be reviewed. As part of the school's approaches to promoting positive behaviour, effective arrangements were in place for dealing with any bullying. The school promoted healthy lifestyles very effectively. Staff regularly encouraged pupils to choose the healthy options on offer in the school dining hall. A recent whole school health promotion event had been successful in developing pupils' understanding of the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet. The school had effective arrangements in place to support pupils entering P1 and for pupils transferring from P7 to the neighbouring secondary school. The school needed to continue with steps taken to improve further pupils' attendance.

Overall, there were important weaknesses in the school's approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs. Pupils' needs were well met in most mathematics lessons. However, there were weaknesses in other curricular areas. For example, in English language lessons, grammar and vocabulary activities from textbooks and worksheets were often not well linked to other aspects of pupils' language work. In too many lessons, teachers did not take enough account of pupils' prior levels of attainment. As a result, able pupils were not sufficiently challenged while others required more support. The learning support teacher with responsibility for the early stages worked very effectively with groups of pupils. She gave suitable priority to supporting different groups in the course of the session, in response to their developing needs. Very good support was provided for pupils with English as an additional language. In P4-P7, the support provided for pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning was limited mainly to reading activities. Learning targets set for pupils were not linked to their prior levels of attainment or to their work in class. There was no additional support for pupils experiencing difficulty in writing or mathematics. The headteacher was planning action to deploy staff more effectively next session, with the aim of improving the support provided for pupils' learning from P4 to P7.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The accommodation had a number of strengths. Classrooms, particularly those in the new block, were bright and spacious. Flexible teaching areas throughout the school allowed teachers and support staff to work with groups and individuals when required. The large hall and access to sports pitches at the neighbouring leisure centre provided good facilities for physical education and fitness activities. Building security arrangements during the course of the pupil day were appropriate. Attractive displays throughout the school enhanced the environment for learning. The school had won an award for improvements made to the outside playing areas and gardens. However, there were also a number of weaknesses. In the course of the inspection process, the education authority was taking action to replace leaking window frames in classrooms and to address issues relating to security outwith normal school hours. Office accommodation, the library and pupils' toilets required refurbishment. Access for the disabled was very limited and there was no disabled access to the dining hall or the upper floors.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>The school had a welcoming atmosphere. There was a strong sense of identity amongst all members of the school community. Staff supported each other well. Most pupils were polite and friendly. Although a significant proportion of pupils and some staff did not agree that behaviour was good in the school, inspectors found that most pupils worked diligently in class and cooperated well with their teachers. The school had identified the need to review its policy on promoting positive behaviour, to ensure that all staff were fully committed to the approaches to be adopted. Pupils had very good opportunities to be involved in decision making through the pupil council and the Eco School committee. Pupils' successes were regularly celebrated at assemblies. Good work and behaviour were recognised through a range of appropriate rewards. Teachers expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievements were not always high enough. All pupils were treated fairly. Programmes of study for religious and moral education and personal and social education provided good opportunities for pupils to learn about issues of equality. The school had a suitable policy in place for racial equality. However, there was scope for greater recognition of the range of cultures represented in the school community, for example through displays and signage across the school. Appropriate opportunities were provided for religious observance.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had developed good partnerships with parents, the School Board and the community. The School Board had been particularly active in seeking to improve the accommodation and to address issues relating to the security of the building outwith normal school hours. There was scope for the Board to communicate more regularly with other parents. The very supportive Parents' Association regularly raised funds to support, for example, educational excursions for pupils and the refurbishment of the school library. Monthly newsletters, the school website and regular Eco School newsletters kept parents well informed about the life and work of the school. The school communicated well with parents about their children's progress through comments in homework diaries, parents' evenings and informative reports. Parents felt comfortable in approaching school about any issues they wished to raise. They had been suitably consulted on sensitive health issues. The headteacher had recognised the need to provide more information for parents about the curriculum. The school had established helpful links with the wider community, including local churches and a wide range of agencies who provided effective support for pupils, such as those with additional social, emotional and behavioural needs. Strong links with the local high school enhanced pupils' learning experiences.

7. Improving the school

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

Gracemount Primary School provided a caring environment for pupils. As a result of supportive relationships amongst staff, and between staff and pupils, there was a positive climate for learning. School staff paid very good attention to the care and welfare of pupils. Attainment in English language, and in aspects of mathematics, needed to be improved. Standards of teaching were too variable overall and pupils' learning needs were not always well met.

The headteacher had been in post for a year at the time of the inspection. Since her appointment, she had been successful in winning the support of the parents and staff. Parents found her very approachable. Staff appreciated the sense of direction she was providing for the school and her effective communication. Despite resistance from a few teachers, she had successfully introduced new approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. She now needed to take further action to ensure consistently high standards of learning and teaching across the school, with a view to raising attainment. The two deputy headteachers provided effective support for the headteacher in running the school. Staff appreciated their support in promoting positive behaviour. Both had made important contributions in their respective areas of responsibility. The principal teacher had been seconded for part of the week to support the introduction of new teaching programmes

in the school, and other neighbouring schools. He had provided some helpful support for staff and pupils but had not always been deployed effectively in the school to meet pupils' learning needs. The remits of the depute headteachers and the principal teacher now needed to focus more on ensuring high quality teaching across the school and on providing proactive support for pupils' learning. The business manager provided valuable support for the headteacher. The headteacher had introduced formal monitoring of learning and teaching by promoted staff, surveys of parents' and pupils' views and had involved all staff in evaluating aspects of learning and teaching, accommodation and resources. A depute headteacher recorded information on pupils' attainment, including the attainment of looked after children. These processes did not yet result consistently in action to improve pupils' learning experiences and attainment where necessary.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve aspects of attainment, teaching and meeting pupils' learning needs, including support for those experiencing difficulties in their learning from P4-P7. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve attainment in English language and mathematics;
- ensure that teachers plan and deliver lessons of a consistently high quality and take more account of information from assessment to meet more effectively the needs of all pupils;
- ensure that self-evaluation leads consistently to action to improve provision where necessary.

The school and education authority should continue to address the issues relating to accommodation and school security identified in this 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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.


HM Inspector

10 October 2006

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	adequate
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	weak
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate

How well are pupils supported?	
Pastoral care	good
Meeting pupils' needs	weak

How good is the environment for learning?	
Accommodation and facilities	adequate
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	good

Improving the school	
Leadership	good
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	adequate
Self-evaluation	good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with 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"> • All thought that their children enjoyed school. • Staff made them feel welcome and showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a fifth wanted to know more about their children's strengths and weaknesses. • Provide a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all thought that teachers gave them good feedback on their work and how to improve, helped them when they had difficulties and gave them the right amount of homework. • All pupils were treated fairly in the school. • They had a say in deciding how to improve the school. 	<p>Half wanted the behaviour of pupils in school to improve.</p>
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils were enthusiastic about learning. • They had good opportunities to be involved in decision making and there was regular discussion about how to achieve school priorities. • They enjoyed working in the school. • There was effective communication between senior managers and staff, and senior managers operated effectively as a team. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a third of support staff wanted better opportunities to be involved in decision making. • They would like greater mutual respect between support staff and pupils and wanted standards set for pupils' behaviour consistently upheld.

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 Director of Children and Families, 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, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8293. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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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. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, 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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HM Inspectorate of Education

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1 November 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

**St Catherine's RC Primary School and Nursery Class
The City of Edinburgh Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's school. Throughout our visit we talked to many parents and children and we worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children were learning and achieving and how well the school supported children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including improving children's writing, work with other partners to support children's learning and support for children with English as an additional language. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Most children are enthusiastic about the school and enjoy learning. In the nursery class they are becoming increasingly independent, confident and able to work with others. At the primary stages, most are interested, keen to express their opinions and able to take some responsibility for their learning. In some cases the pace and impact of lessons still needs to be better to ensure everyone is fully engaged in their work. A few children display challenging behaviour. Staff respond well overall, but occasionally the pace of lessons is disrupted. Children feel safe, respected and well cared for. Those who are more vulnerable are well supported. Children benefit from a wide range of experiences, including after school, which develop skills in many areas. For example, the pupil council and the health and eco committees help children to develop useful life skills and confidence, and sports clubs improve their health and wellbeing. Children express their views confidently. Their writing has improved due to the new approaches the school is using. By P7, most are writing well and many have considerable potential in the way they use their imagination. Most are interested in books and enjoy stories. Progress in mathematics is more variable. The 'fast track' group at P4 is responding very well to the challenging activities provided. The school has recognised that others are not yet secure enough in number work. Teaching groups have been reorganised, to let teachers work with children at the same level of progress.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff know children and their families very well and provide a high level of support and encouragement. They help children to overcome barriers to learning. In the nursery class, children make choices and follow their own interests. At the primary stages, tasks and

¹ This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as this will not connect.

activities are well chosen to match the wide range of needs. Procedures for identifying and supporting children who need additional help are suitable. Children who are looked after and accommodated and those for whom English is an additional language are very well supported. The school has developed innovative and effective partnerships with other professional agencies. The *Place 2 Be* initiative provides a counselling service which is having a very positive impact on the wellbeing of more vulnerable children. In addition, there are close, effective links with social work services, speech and language therapy, educational psychology, community police and health services. The school welcomes children from other cultures and encourages them exceptionally well to make a very positive contribution to school life. The curriculum is well planned. There is a positive approach towards promoting literacy and numeracy skills, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. The school promotes health and wellbeing in many ways, including the provision of two hours per week of good quality physical education. The school has an ethos which promotes concern for others, for example in supporting street children in Mexico. There is a very strong faith community through close links with the local Roman Catholic parish.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher is highly committed to the school. He has a clear vision about how it should move forward and is well supported by a strong senior management team and by staff. Arrangements for self-evaluation are systematic and link clearly to the continuous professional development programme for staff. The school is well supported by the Parent Council and is increasing children's involvement in developing their school. The school improvement plan has clear and appropriate priorities. The school is very well placed to continue its improvement.

This inspection of your school and nursery class found the following key strengths.

- The very positive atmosphere within the school.
- Strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior management team.
- The high quality of support for potentially vulnerable children.
- A systematic and effective approach to self-evaluation and quality improvement.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue the improvement of children's attainment in writing and number work.
- Continue improving learners' experiences across the school, particularly the pace of learning.
- Continue developing the curriculum to meet the wide range of children's needs.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified aspects of innovative practice which we would like to explore further in order to share the practice with others. As a result we will work with the school and local authority in order to record and share more widely the innovative practice. We will ask the school, in discussion with the local authority, to let parents know the outcome of the innovative practice visit(s).

Lachlan MacCallum
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/ViewEstablishment.aspx?id=7127&type=2>

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29 October 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

**Liberton Primary School and Nursery Class
The City of Edinburgh Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including approaches to developing leadership skills across the school. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

In the nursery class, almost all children are interested and engage well in the activities which they have chosen. They achieve well and have good opportunities to develop and apply their learning. They do this around the playroom and in the outside area on a regular basis and also in the local community and beyond. Examples include visits to Gorgie City Farm and the development of children's art skills. Older children in the nursery, for example, can use a range of materials to create very good art work.

From P1 to P7, almost all children are well motivated and eager to learn. This is reflected in, for example, their participation in cooperative learning and their responses when presented with learning which is demanding and challenging. Children are keen to research and gather information to support their learning and to discuss and share their ideas. There is room to develop children's skills in learning more consistently and creatively across the school. This could include, for example, the more effective use of feedback on what needs improvement, the use of information and communications technology and a clearer focus on developing and deepening children's thinking.

Overall, children are making good progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Almost all children can explain their thinking through discussion and can share key ideas from texts. They read for pleasure and almost all are fluent and expressive readers. Children at all stages are developing and using effective vocabulary and achieving well in writing. Children are learning how to apply what they learn in mathematics to everyday contexts. Across all stages, children's skills in solving mathematical problems are developing well.

Children are able to discuss aspects of health and wellbeing with confidence and understand the role they can play in bringing about improvements in the school. This ensures that children feel included and safe. Children at all stages are able to make choices that will best support a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of being physically active. Children are making good progress across some other areas of the curriculum. For example, children are developing a very good appreciation of music across the school. This includes regular whole-school singing sessions. A number of children benefit from instrumental instruction and use this well to add value to the musical life of the school. Children's achievements overall are recognised and celebrated across the school.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff pay very good attention to the pastoral care of children. Before children start nursery, staff successfully use PEEP (Parent Early Education Partnership) approaches with children and their families. Children are very well supported when moving from nursery to P1. Children feel safe and cared for in school and are confident that staff will provide assistance and support as required. Aspects of the practice to support children with additional short- or long-term needs are very strong. This includes, for example, very effective partnership working. We have asked teachers to make sure children's learning needs are met more consistently by ensuring they provide suitable levels of pace and challenge in lessons. Staff have made good progress over the past year in implementing important aspects of Curriculum for Excellence but there is a need to increase the overall pace of change. Overall, staff provide a variety of learning opportunities for children. This includes the developing use of the outdoor area surrounding the school, and opportunities such as Benmore residential centre and Forest Schools approaches. The outdoors area linked to the nursery provides a stimulating learning environment which is being well used.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

In his two years in post, the headteacher has worked very effectively with the whole staff team to identify what the school needs to do to improve. Staff have put a range of appropriate approaches in place to evaluate their own work. This includes seeking feedback from yourselves as parents on aspects such as how best to share information about your children's learning and progress. Many of these approaches are still at an early stage of development and are not yet having a significant impact on children's experiences and achievements. The headteacher is very well supported by the depute headteachers and the principal teacher. They work very well together to develop and support staff confidence and leadership across the school. Relationships with the Parent Council are good and provide a strong basis on which to develop the greater involvement of you, as parents, in supporting your children's learning and wider school improvement. Parents support the work of the nursery very well through, for example, raising the funds needed to create the outdoor learning area. Children's views are gathered in a variety of ways and are taken well into account. The school environment has been improved as a direct result of suggestions from the pupil council. Building on the strong ethos of support and the leadership skills now being developed, the staff, children and parents of Liberton Primary School are well positioned to take forward further improvement.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Children who are well motivated, engaged and keen to learn.
- The overall quality of pastoral care and support for children.
- Aspects of learning and the range of opportunities being developed, such as the use of the outdoor area, to enable children to achieve more.

We discussed with staff and the City of Edinburgh Council how they might continue to improve the school and nursery class. This is what we agreed with them.

- Increase the pace of implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Continue to focus on improving consistency in the quality of learning.
- Ensure that the school's approaches to self-evaluation support all staff and learners to focus on learning and achievement.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that most of the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with the City of Edinburgh Council to build capacity for improvement and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Parents will be informed of the extent to which the school has improved.


HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/LibertonPrimarySchoolEdinburghCity.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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**Danderhall Primary School
and Nursery Class
Midlothian Council
25 August 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

² Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school

Danderhall Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Danderhall and the surrounding area in Midlothian. The roll was 297, including 59 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The quality of relationships between staff and children and the care taken by all staff to promote children's welfare.
- The very effective partnership with Dalkeith Integration Team to support children's learning and development.
- The headteacher's ability to inspire staff's confidence in developing their teaching approaches to help children be more active in their learning.
- The involvement of staff in the life and work of the school to support children's personal development.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery are happy and involved in their learning and play. They can persevere well in completing tasks they have chosen. Staff use praise and encouragement well to help develop children's confidence in their learning. They now need to involve children and parents more fully in planning the next steps in each child's learning. In the primary classes, children express their opinions about how they learn best during regular group meetings with the headteacher and depute headteacher. Overall, however, they need more regular information from teachers about how they are getting on in their classwork. This would help them understand how to improve their learning. Across the school, children learn well together working in groups when they are given the opportunity to do so. Many, particularly at P1 and P2, would benefit from more such opportunities. At P6 and P7, children develop personal qualities of teamwork and determination through their experiences in outdoor education.

Children now need further opportunities to experience success and contribute to the life of the school in a wider variety of ways.

In the nursery, children freely express their own ideas through making models, drawing and painting. Most can talk confidently about growing and caring for plants, and about changes in weather. Many children can use a mouse well to select and take part in computer activities. They enjoy showing their skills in physical movement in the gymnasium and outdoor play. In the primary classes, children achieve well in art and design. For example, children from different classes across the school work together to produce drawings and paintings to create attractive displays of artwork around the school. Children contributed entertaining stories to their published book of children's writing, 'We are Writers'. Those from P5 to P7 worked successfully with their teachers and professionals from Scottish Opera to perform a dramatic opera about the Jacobites. Most children are learning to work well in teams and develop their creativity through these activities. In addition, many develop further their enjoyment of sport at after-school clubs.

Nursery children are learning how to listen well. They talk confidently to adults and each other. They enjoy recording their names at snack time. Children are developing their early mathematical skills such as sorting and matching through their play activities. Across the primary classes, standards of attainment vary considerably. Overall, a majority of children achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and in writing. Most do so in mathematics. In reading, this proportion has increased in recent years. However, in writing and in mathematics, standards have not improved significantly. There is considerable scope for many children to achieve more. At several stages, children are using their literacy skills increasingly effectively to help them plan and organise their ideas. They can use scientific words accurately when describing plants and insects. At P6 and P7, children need more opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes. In mathematics, children at P7 work well together to solve problems involving calculation and shape, position, and movement.

They are less confident handling information in the form of graphs and charts. Children are making good progress in learning French.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Nursery staff plan activities based on children's interests. As a result children experience challenge and enjoyment across all areas of their play. For example, they use number and early literacy skills in imaginative play. They freely experiment with a wide range of tools and materials in creating artwork. In the primary classes, children learn well through suitably challenging experiences in art and design, and in outdoor education. At all stages, children are learning to work together to plan and organise enterprising events, for example, designing and making things to sell. Teachers need to ensure that additional time given to English language is used effectively to help children further develop their skills in writing. The school's approaches to personal and social education help children learn about keeping themselves safe and healthy. However, children's learning is not always well planned across all curricular areas. In mathematics, teachers need to help children build on what they have already learned. Children's learning in science should now include a better range of increasingly challenging topics. Not all children take part each week in two hours of high quality physical education. The school has begun to develop its curriculum in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

In the nursery, tasks and activities meet the needs of most children well. Staff need to support and encourage children to engage in more challenging play, for example when learning out of doors. In the best lessons, children work actively together on challenging activities that engage their attention and help them make progress in their learning. Across the school, however, tasks set by teachers sometimes are too easy or difficult for different groups of children. There are examples of effective teaching but practice is not consistent enough. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment when planning children's next steps in learning. Overall, too many children are not achieving as well as they might. Children with additional support needs are well

supported by class teachers and specialist staff. Individual educational plans contain appropriate short and long term learning targets that help children make good progress in their learning and personal development. The school recognises the need to provide more interesting and challenging homework.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

The school works well with a range of partners to support children's learning. Teachers work closely with the home-link teacher and other professional partners in health and education, to provide a range of effective support for individual children. In particular, the school's partnership with the Dalkeith Integration Team provided high quality support to help children improve their attendance and involvement with their learning. Parents show very strong support for the school. Almost all regularly attend parents evenings. Most find school reports on their child's learning helpful and informative. A few parents would like more frequent information on their child's learning between reports. The school is good at dealing with complaints. Staff and parents work well together to support the work of the school through very active fundraising activities and helping with after school clubs. The school now needs to involve parents more fully as active partners in their child's learning.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Teaching and support staff are very committed to their school and to the care and welfare of children. Almost all are involved in leading or helping with activities beyond the school day. Each teacher takes responsibility for developing an aspect of school life, for example improving the use of information and communication technology to provide better support for children's learning. Teachers now need to share such good practice in learning and teaching across all aspects of the work of the school. Children at P6 and P7 help younger children's playground experiences by acting as buddies. They devised

and sold a very practical ecological book bag to help raise awareness about the environment. Recently, the pupil council, working with the depute headteacher, had successfully negotiated an anti-bullying charter for the school. Children see the adults in their school as a source of help and support. The school gathers information about its performance in a range of ways. Senior staff observe children's learning, study attainment information and seek the views of parents and staff. Staff now need to use this information better to improve children's learning.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

Relationships between staff and children are very positive. The school has good arrangements to recognise and celebrate children's achievements through its assemblies and the plasma screen in the school foyer. Children have regular opportunities for religious observance. The school is good at enabling children to showcase their learning in expressive arts, such as their creative writing and their school opera. The school is accessible to people with physical disabilities. Children develop their understanding of fairness and equality through their learning about other cultures, for example through their active support of the 'Seeds for Africa' campaign. Children know about the importance of keeping fit, eating healthily and how to keep themselves safe. All staff are trained in child protection procedures and regularly update their knowledge. Children respond well to the high standards teachers set for their behaviour. There remains scope to improve their expectations of what children can achieve.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The headteacher provides strongly supportive leadership which has helped create the very positive ethos of the school. She has fostered very effective teamwork with staff, experts and professionals in supporting children's welfare. Staff embrace with enthusiasm the opportunities they are given to help to improve the school. The depute headteacher provides good support to the headteacher. Through her

modelling of effective teaching the principal teacher demonstrated good practice to staff. Together with the depute headteacher and the principal teacher, the headteacher now needs to help teachers develop a shared understanding of what they need to do to provide consistently high quality learning for all their children. Teachers need to develop their practice in reviewing their work and deciding what works best to help children learn. In this way, they can more effectively help the school to improve.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits following this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Raise attainment in English language and mathematics across the primary classes by ensuring that learning activities are set at the right level for all children.
- Broaden the curriculum and ensure that children build on what they have already learned.
- Improve approaches to learning and teaching to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged.
- Make more effective use of self-evaluation to provide children with consistently high quality learning experiences.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement which had been met. There were no recommendations.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Danderhall Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: [REDACTED]
25 August 2009

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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