

**Law Primary School
North Berwick
East Lothian Council
2 September 2008**

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1. Background

Law Primary School was inspected in April/May 2008 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 innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met members of the Parent Council, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the town of North Berwick and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 609. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Standards of attainment in English language and mathematics, and pupils' wider achievements.
- The broad, relevant and stimulating curriculum.
- Consistently high quality approaches to learning and teaching.
- Well motivated pupils and their involvement in learning.
- Outstanding engagement of staff in the life and work of the school.
- Leadership of the headteacher and senior management team.

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.

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

Parents were very satisfied with the school. They thought that their children enjoyed school and found learning activities stimulating and challenging. They felt welcome in the school and found parents' evenings helpful and informative. Parents thought that teachers set high standards for children's achievements and provided helpful information on how to support their children with homework. Pupils felt safe and well looked-after in school. They thought that teachers explained things clearly and were good at helping them know how to improve their learning. They liked the ways teachers praised them when they had done something well and encouraged them to work as hard as they could. Pupils enjoyed being in school and having opportunities to say how to make the school even better. Staff were very positive about working in the school. All thought that the school was well led and that senior managers worked well together as a team. Staff felt fully involved in making decisions about how to achieve school priorities.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The overall quality of the curriculum was very good. Pupils benefited from a broad range of well-planned and stimulating learning experiences. Curricular programmes promoted progression in pupils' learning and helped them develop appropriate skills across the various areas of the curriculum. Staff continuously looked for ways to develop the curriculum further and had introduced a number of innovations to ensure coherence in learning for all pupils. They gave good attention to developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum and to helping them understand the relevance of their learning. Pupils had very effective opportunities to develop skills in enterprise education, education for sustainability and how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Despite the limits of suitable space for physical activity, all pupils received almost two hours of challenging physical education each week. Pupils enjoyed using a range of information and communications technology (ICT) regularly to support all aspects of their learning. Approaches to developing their personal and social skills were integrated very effectively throughout the curriculum. The quality of teaching for effective learning was very good. Teachers had established a very positive learning environment. They used a variety of well-considered teaching approaches. These successfully engaged pupils in learning experiences that were challenging and linked to real-life contexts. They encouraged pupils to express their views, ask questions and think for themselves. Staff ensured that pupils were clear about the purposes of tasks and how well they were progressing.

Pupils were highly motivated and clearly enjoyed their learning experiences. They participated eagerly in activities and regularly took responsibility for aspects of their own learning. Pupils applied themselves well to working independently and cooperatively with others. They interacted very positively with teachers and each other. They used feedback from teachers, their own evaluations and those of their peers, to improve their performance. Pupils enjoyed their successes in learning and were keen to achieve even more.

Improvements in performance

Over recent years, the school had continued to improve its work in a number of important areas and had made very good improvements overall.

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good. Over the past three years, the school had maintained high levels of achievement in listening, talking, reading and writing. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment and a significant minority had achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. At all stages, pupils listened well for information and instructions. They expressed their own feelings and opinions confidently and contributed skilfully to discussions. Pupils were competent in reading for information and used these skills well when fact-finding for topics they were studying. They could identify different types of books and talk about the skills used by authors. At all stages, pupils were developing appropriate skills in writing for a variety of purposes. They organised their writing well and showed good understanding of punctuation and grammar. Most gave good attention to the presentation of their written work. Pupils applied their writing skills well across the various areas of the curriculum. At P7, pupils regularly reported on major school events and achievements on the school blog.

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Standards of attainment had remained consistently high for the past three years. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment and were making very good progress in classwork. Across the school, pupils could read and interpret information from a range of graphs. They were competent in carrying out oral and written calculations involving number, money and measurement. At P6, pupils were confident in calculating fractions. Pupils were benefiting from opportunities to apply and develop their numeracy skills across other aspects of the curriculum. At all stages, they showed a good understanding of shape. They could describe the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. At P7, pupils demonstrated an appropriate understanding of area and perimeter. Across the school, they were developing their knowledge of problem-solving strategies and could apply these to practical situations.

Pupils were making good progress in developing skills across the curriculum. They demonstrated a sound awareness of various drawing and painting techniques which they had used creatively to produce a range of art displays. Pupils at P4 could identify styles of music from other countries and could name tuned and untuned percussion instruments. At P6, pupils participated confidently in role-play. In environmental studies, pupils were developing an appropriate range of knowledge and skills. At the early stages, they knew what was required to make plants grow. At P6, they demonstrated good knowledge of the solar system and could name the planets and their distinctive features. Pupils at P4 were developing a good understanding of what life was like in medieval times. Throughout the school, pupils were confident in using ICT. At the upper stages, they demonstrated very good understanding of how to create and use podcasts and blogs to communicate effectively with a range of audiences.

Staff gave very good attention to promoting and recognising pupils' wider achievements. They took into account pupils' interests and talents to provide a wide range of opportunities to extend their skills and develop new interests. Pupils benefited from a variety of after-school activities that promoted and developed their physical and

sporting skills. Members of school teams for rugby, swimming, football and golf had enjoyed success in winning regional sporting events. Pupils at P4 to P7 were learning to play a range of musical instruments and demonstrated their progress at an annual music event. At all stages, pupils contributed responsibly to the decision-making processes in the school by participating in the pupil council and committees. Senior pupils demonstrated caring and responsible attitudes in supporting younger pupils feel safe and valued in school. They acted as buddies at break times and at after-school clubs. The school's house system helped to foster pupils' team spirit and mutual support. Pupils demonstrated responsible attitudes towards their own community in taking part in the annual Spring Clean Week. They showed positive attitudes towards helping others through their efforts to raise money for various charities. A range of enterprise activities had enabled pupils to develop good understanding of enterprise and the world of work.

The school had made very good progress in achieving the priorities in its improvement plan. The planned improvements were having a positive effect on pupils' progress. Pupils were benefiting from opportunities to help teachers plan environmental studies projects. This had enabled them to have choices about what they were learning and to extend their individual skills and interests. At all stages, pupils had increased their motivation and engagement in learning through using a wider range of ICT to support and enhance their learning.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The learning needs of pupils across the school were very well met. Teachers ensured that tasks and activities were appropriate for the range of pupils' needs. They grouped pupils across classes for English language and mathematics activities, helping them to learn at the appropriate pace. The school ensured that higher-achieving pupils were suitably challenged. Visiting specialists and school support staff provided valuable support and challenge to help pupils progress across a range of curricular areas. The deputy headteachers managed the school's arrangements for pupil support very effectively. They helped teachers identify pupils' specific needs and to address these needs appropriately in class. Teachers met regularly with senior managers and support for learning specialists to discuss pupils' individual progress and decide on the next steps in learning. Designated staff worked together very effectively to plan and deliver suitable programmes for pupils with exceptional additional needs. These pupils were making very good progress towards their learning targets. Overall, support for learning teachers provided well-planned activities to enhance pupils' learning. The school worked very effectively with other agencies, including the educational psychologist and community police, to address pupils' specific needs. Support staff made a very positive contribution to pupils with additional support needs. They worked effectively with groups to improve coordination and literacy skills. Coordinated support plans (CSPs) and individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were planned in partnership with other agencies and parents. They provided appropriate targets for pupils and were reviewed regularly.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>Arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils were very good. The school had implemented a range of appropriate policies to help meet pupils' emotional, physical, health and social needs. Staff were confident in child protection issues and had received appropriate training. They dealt sensitively and effectively with children's needs and concerns. Staff provided very good role models for pupils and relationships between pupils and staff were characterised by trust, respect and confidence. Pupils showed care and respect for each other during play and social activities. The school promoted healthy living effectively through a range of whole school events and planned learning activities. Staff worked well with colleagues from pre-school establishments and other schools to support pupils with the transition to, and from, primary school.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>Staff made effective use of the available space for learning, social and leisure activities. They had established a bright and attractive environment by creating interesting displays in classrooms and corridors. A mural at the entrance to the school, a sensory garden and courtyard play area enhanced the school grounds and provided valuable opportunities for learning outdoors. The school had a wide range of up-to-date resources that were well organised and easily accessed. Appropriate arrangements were made to address health and safety, and security issues. However, most classrooms and the staffroom lacked sufficient space. The building was in need of repair. There were ramps to assist pupils and visitors with restricted mobility to move around the school. Pupils using wheelchairs were unable to get around independently due to the lack of suitable door access systems.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The school had a strong sense of community that promoted and sustained high quality relationships among pupils and staff. Staff had set consistently high expectations of pupils' achievements, attendance and behaviour. Pupils had very good awareness of the standards they were expected to achieve. They applied themselves well to learning activities and to participating fully in school life. They valued teachers' feedback and praise and having their achievements recognised through class and school reward systems. Pupils were very well-behaved and were friendly, polite and caring. Pupils and parents were treated equally and included in the life of the school. The school welcomed and promoted diversity across many aspects of its work. Pupils had recently participated in a multicultural week that had widened their understanding and appreciation of different cultures and languages. Arrangements for religious observance were appropriate.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>The school was very successful in involving parents, carers and families. The Parent Council actively supported the work of the school and contributed positively to decision making processes. Parents and grandparents helped regularly in school to support aspects of children's learning. Staff provided parents with a range of helpful communications to inform them about the school's work. This included the use of the school weblog to give parents access to up-to-date information on school events and achievements. Parents received clear and regular information on their children's progress through written reports and talking directly to teachers. They received valuable guidance on supporting children's homework and the school's approaches to sensitive health education matters. The school valued its role in the wider community. Staff were proactive and innovative in working with the local community on a range of projects to extend pupils' understanding of wider social, environmental and economic issues.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Law Primary School provided pupils with high-quality education. The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school was outstanding. Their clear and shared understanding of what was involved in providing high standards of education was helping pupils to achieve their best. Staff had established a dynamic and ambitious environment for learning. Individually, and collectively, they applied their commitment and professional skills to ensure that pupils received challenging, relevant and enjoyable learning experiences. Pupils were very motivated and participated fully in lessons, demonstrating independence and confidence in learning. The school was successful in maintaining high levels of pupils' attainment in both English language and mathematics and in promoting pupils' wider achievements.

The headteacher provided very effective leadership and had placed a strong focus on promoting continuous improvement. He had successfully established a shared sense of responsibility among staff in working together to achieve it. He knew his staff well and challenged and supported them to develop and use their skills to bring about on-going improvements to learning and teaching. The depute headteachers had clear roles and responsibilities that they carried out very effectively. They provided high-level support and guidance to staff to assist them improve further the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Approaches to staff development were highly effective. Staff were encouraged to make full use of their skills and interests to introduce new and interesting approaches to learning and teaching. This had resulted in improved achievements for pupils in literacy, ICT and health, and very good progress in developing as successful learners and effective contributors. Staff were very committed to self-evaluation. Individually, and collectively, teachers regularly reflected on their own practice and its impact on pupils' achievements. The staff team used their evaluations, and the views of pupils and parents, to take carefully-planned actions to enhance pupils' learning experiences. Senior managers used a range of well-considered approaches to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and to monitor pupils' progress. The staff team shared best practice very effectively and carefully monitored the impact of current developments. The school was very well placed to continue to improve its work.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- Continue to develop numeracy across the curriculum.

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.

Norma Wright
HM Inspector

2 September 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	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
Improvements in performance	very good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs	very good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	satisfactory
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	excellent
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	very 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	very 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 encouraged children to work to the best of their ability. • Parents' evenings were helpful and informative and written reports gave valuable information on their children's progress. • The school had a good reputation in the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school building needed to be improved.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers expected pupils to work as hard as they could. • Teachers explained things clearly and helped them when they had difficulties with classwork. • Teachers listened to what they had to say. • Teachers let them know how they were getting on with their work and praised them when they had done something well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of some pupils could be improved.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were very positive about all aspects of the life and work of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

Appendix 3 Good practice

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

Engagement of staff in the life and work of the school

Staff set out to build upon the ethos of teamwork within the school. Teachers created new opportunities to work with others teaching at the same stage of the school and with colleagues throughout the school. Together, they planned events such as a P7 musical, P6 Victorian and Murder Mystery week, and P3 Around the World presentation that provided pupils with fun and excitement in learning. Teachers at P6 and P7 worked closely with those at P1 and P2 to create opportunities for older pupils to buddy younger pupils in reading and ICT activities. This resulted in pupils achieving success in personal development, literacy and ICT skills. Staff made very good use of pupils' views and their own skills and interests to provide a wide range of lunch-time clubs for pupils and staff. Staff and pupils enjoyed learning with, and from each other, and this had firmly established a strong sense of mutual respect, responsibility and support across the school community.

Effective use of ICT

Staff wanted to be more innovative in their use of ICT. They created a school blog to provide information on all aspects of school life and to encourage a regular dialogue between home and school. Staff worked closely with the local authority ICT team to set up the site and then took on responsibilities for maintaining it. Pupils were given a key role in providing the content. Pupils at the upper stages displayed and gave an account of their achievements and the range of activities that they had taken part in. Across the school, pupils used the site to provide feedback on school events. At P6 and P7, a pilot programme for homework was introduced with homework tasks and links to helpful educational sites posted on the blog. The blog also helped parents to keep in contact with their children who took part in the P7 residential trip and let them know about the daily activities. Development and use of the blog has helped to promote pupils' language, ICT and independent learning skills. It has also proved to be a highly effective way of highlighting and celebrating pupils' achievements.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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 (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsa.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsa.org.uk.

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