

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW

# FOX COVERT PRIMARY SCHOOL

JUNE 2008

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## THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

Fox Covert Primary School is a non-denominational primary school built in 1966 which serves the Clerwood area of west Edinburgh. The catchment area comprises both owner occupied and council housing.

The current school roll is 138. There are six classes in the school. The pupil teacher ratio is 15:1.

Sixteen district and seven non-district pupils enrolled in P1 in August 2007.

The absence rate for 2006-2007 was 13 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 18. There were no formal exclusions during the period.

The pupil unit cost for 2006-2007 was £3961, compared to authority and national averages of £3228 and £3422 respectively. There is a Parent Council and Parent Forum.

### PUPIL ATTAINMENT

The school's current performance in relation to national 5-14 attainment is:

	2005	2006	2007
Reading	83%	85%	86%
Writing	84%	88%	79%
Mathematics	91%	84%	79%

### REVIEW PROCEDURES

Fox Covert Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Development and Neighbourhood Management Groups of the Children and Families Department during March 2008. An experienced practitioner from another school in the city was also part of the review team. The review was based on the quality indicators in *How good is our school?* 3.

The review was based on two focus areas both of which included aspects of leadership and equalities:

- ✿ leadership for learning; and
- ✿ support for learners.

The members of the review team made their evaluation on the basis of evidence provided by the school and their own observations. The results of their findings are given below as a commentary on the school's report.

In order to make their evaluation, the team consulted a number of school documents, including the improvement plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, nine lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a 20% sample of parents.

Seventy two questionnaires were sent to parents and 36 were returned.

Verbal questionnaires were carried out with sample groups of pupils.

### PARENTS' / CARERS' VIEWS

- ✿ All parents said that the school had a good reputation in the community. Almost all parents said the school was well led, their child enjoyed the stimulating activities and knew that their child was fairly treated and would be helped if he/she was having difficulties. These parents were satisfied with their partnership with the school and the behaviour of pupils. Most parents did not consider the school had good accommodation. The majority of parents would like more information about their child's progress.

## PUPILS' VIEWS

✿ All pupils spoke of the help the school gave them in keeping themselves safe and healthy. Almost all pupils spoke of their enjoyment at being at school and the positive relationships between them and their teachers. Pupils said that teachers almost always explained things clearly and they were encouraged to do their best. These pupils felt they were well supported in their learning although a few would like more time to talk individually with their teachers. Almost all pupils said behaviour in the school was good.

## FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

### 1 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

The review team considered the following quality indicators from 'How good is our school? 3':

- 2.1 Learners' experiences
- 2.2 Teaching for effective learning
- 5.5 Expectations and promoting achievement
- 5.6 Equality and fairness
- 5.8 Care, welfare and development
- 9.3 Developing people and partnerships

Overall support for learners was considered to be very good.

#### Strengths in support for learners

Pupils were proud of their school, motivated and eager to learn. They were actively involved in taking forward their own learning and knew what they needed to do to develop their skills. The use of pupil learning logs was well embedded. Pupils identified targets for their learning, worked to meet them and celebrated their success. Commendably, parents had recently been involved in agreeing targets with their child and class teacher. A recent open afternoon highlighted parents' positive acknowledgement of this development in helping them share in their child's learning in school.

The pupils had actively contributed to all aspects of school life and were confident their voice was heard and views valued. They had effectively supported their classmates and younger pupils through well planned and motivating activities. These included P7 pupils buddying with P1/P2 pupils to support playground games. P6 pupils had buddied nursery children to ease their transition to P1.

The staff had provided very good opportunities for pupils to work successfully in groups which had helped develop independence and responsibility. In most classes tasks and skills were differentiated to take account of the learning needs of individual pupils. Creativity was successfully promoted through a range of activities well matched to all pupils' needs and built on their prior learning. The use of IT to support learning and teaching was developing well throughout the school. Interactive white boards were used well and pupils made effective and confident use of these. Very good use was made of the information technology suite. All classes had weekly teaching sessions working through agreed programmes. Pupil progress was recorded systematically.

Cooperative working was clearly reflected during the P3-P7 team day. This successful event had been very well planned by staff to provide exciting opportunities for pupils from different classes to work together on the topic World Book Day. Pupils had worked closely in their teams, allocating specific roles to enhance the efficiency of their team working. They had supported each other effectively and were able to experience a range of resources to enhance their learning such as cameras, musical instruments, computers and books. They demonstrated independence in their learning and confidence in solving problems together. This initiative exemplified new national approaches to providing a more integrated curriculum. Pupils had confidently

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discussed their work and ably demonstrated their developing skills in becoming successful learners, responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals.

The learning support teacher had provided strong support to all staff. She had met regularly with learning assistants to discuss pupils' work and develop the next steps in their learning. The learning assistants were very well deployed to provide targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils. Their contribution to supporting pupils was commendable. They were committed to ensuring increased personal and skills development and had undertaken additional, appropriate training to support pupils effectively. Examples of very good flexible working practices were organised to impact positively on pupils' learning.

Learning support programmes were very good and provided clear pathways for supporting pupils' learning. High quality individualised educational programmes (IEPs), additional support and medical care plans contained appropriate learning targets for particular pupils. Parents, pupils and teachers had begun to discuss progress and identify targets in learning plans.

The teacher of physical education had provided excellent support for pupils. She had introduced a movement programme for identified pupils and had delivered this in conjunction with the support for learning teacher. This well organised programme was popular with pupils who enjoyed taking part and celebrating their achievements.

Staff were proactive in working with partner agencies to meet pupils' learning needs more effectively. Partner agency staff had commented positively on the commitment of all school staff to ensuring the best possible support for pupils. They were impressed with the positive approach and close working relationships they experienced throughout the school.

All staff were clear about their roles and

responsibilities for pupils' welfare and development. Mutual respect, positive relationships and shared values were evident throughout the school.

Pupils and their families were well supported through transition points at nursery to P1 and P7 to S1. The close working with the neighbouring nursery in preparing children for school was excellent practice. The cluster transition programme was proving effective in supporting pupils moving to secondary school.

The school's approach to developing people and partnerships was collegiate and consultative. A supportive work environment was evident and staff were confident in delivering and adapting working practices to meet pupils' needs more appropriately. The commitment of staff to addressing barriers to learning was commendable.

### **Area for development in support for learners**

The school should continue to develop and share assessment strategies and track pupil progress systematically to ensure that all learning needs are met and all pupils are appropriately challenged.

## **2 LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

The review team considered the following quality indicators from *'How good is our school? 3'*:

- 2.1 Learners' experiences
- 5.2 Teaching for effective learning
- 7.2 Staff deployment and teamwork
- 9.1 Vision, values and aims
- 9.3 Leadership and direction
- 9.4 Leadership of improvement and change

Overall leadership for learning was considered to be very good.

### Strengths in leadership for learning

The headteacher (HT) had worked with staff, pupils, parents and the wider community to develop a realistic improvement plan for the school. The plan reflected the common vision developed for the school. The priorities agreed were realistic and appropriate and were closely linked to classroom practice.

All staff appreciated the support and direction provided by the HT and the principal teacher. They felt empowered to take responsibility for developing areas of particular interest to them. As a result, initiatives such as eco schools and health promoting schools had progressed significantly. The developing cluster Colour project was a very good example of the positive team work across the school in leading and developing partnership initiatives.

All staff spoke very positively about the supportive climate throughout the school. Staff, pupils' and parents' views had been welcomed and acted on. Staff were encouraged by the management team to take on additional roles and responsibilities. They had commented on the strong sense of team work and the quality of relationships in place. The contributions of all staff had impacted positively on the effective running of the school.

The HT gave clear leadership to the school and was unstinting in her commitment to delivering the best possible learning for all children. The children had welcomed her high profile around the school when she constantly took time to speak with them and the staff.

Very good liaison and communication was evident throughout the school and also with partner agencies. Written communications with parents were a priority. The school handbook and information booklet for incoming P1 pupils were attractive and easy to read. Monthly newsletters for parents were informative and gave details of key events and achievements.

The school website was being developed further to ensure the inclusion of comprehensive information. Commendably, a group of P6/P7 pupils was leading this development. The pupils had issued a questionnaire to staff and parents and had analysed the results to inform the content of the site. The school's principal teacher and a parent were assisting the pupils in their task.

The management team were proactive, responsive and had developed very good relationships with all in the school community.

A supportive, consultative approach was evident and was positively impacting on all who worked and learned in the school. The HT had incorporated very detailed systems and structures to support the school's vision, values and future direction. She was committed to continuous improvement and had led by example to take the school forward.

The excellent links with the adjoining Fox Covert RC Primary School were building a strong sense of community across both schools and were an exemplary model of effective joint working. Many initiatives had been developed across the schools with staff and pupils. The recent celebration to open the playground pavilions was conducted entirely by pupils and was an excellent example of the development of confident individuals and responsible citizens in both schools.

The HT had successfully led staff in developing a policy for monitoring and evaluating the quality of work throughout the school. This policy had included regular evaluation of teachers' forward plans by the HT and principal teacher. Written and verbal feedback on aspects of the plans was provided for teachers. Pupils' work was sampled and discussed. There was systematic evaluation of classroom practice on the quality of learning and teaching with clear feedback given to staff.

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Some teachers had welcomed the opportunity to observe a lesson in another class and to share good practice with colleagues.

The HT had placed strong emphasis on the development of shared leadership responsibility for all members of staff. Staff had very clear job descriptions and remits which positively impacted on pupils' learning and development. Teaching and support staff were familiar with the remits of all colleagues.

All staff had made a significant contribution to the work of the school and had played a full part in the staff team. A number of working parties had been established to develop priorities from the improvement plan. Staff were enthusiastic and committed to the developments undertaken.

Pupils were very positive about their leadership roles in the school. These had included membership of the pupil council and the eco and health groups. Pupils throughout the school were aware of the various groups and information on developments was shared at assemblies and by group members in their own classes.

P7 pupils were responsible for the organisation and staffing of the healthy tuckshop. The eco school committee members were proud of the completion of the playground pavilions which were benefiting pupils and parents. Their recycling initiative throughout the school was also a positive development.

All classes had been given set responsibilities throughout the school and pupils were all able to discuss these and comment on them. Pupils had carried out their duties responsibly and effectively. All pupils were polite and welcoming and obviously took great pride in the school.

### Areas for development in leadership for learning

The school should review its arrangements for electing pupils on to different groups to ensure a more consistent approach. The school should give serious consideration to the Pupil Council having its own budget or to give it scope to fund raise for its own projects.

The Pupil Council and eco committee members should have the opportunity to present at whole school assemblies and contribute articles to the monthly letter that is issued to parents.

The school should continue to develop a regular, agreed programme which enables staff to observe other lessons and share good practice in learning and teaching across the school.

## SUMMARY

### Commendable features

- ✿ The very effective leadership of the headteacher and principal teacher.
- ✿ The calm and purposeful learning environment.
- ✿ The strong team work and relationships between staff and pupils.
- ✿ The effectiveness of the learning support teacher and all learning and classroom assistants in meeting learners' needs.
- ✿ The effective partnership working with other agencies in supporting learners.
- ✿ The excellent links with Fox Covert RC Primary School.

### Areas for development by the school

- ✿ Continue to develop and share assessment strategies and track pupil progress systematically to ensure that learning needs are met and all pupils appropriately challenged.

- ✿ Continue to develop a regular, agreed programme which enables staff to observe other lessons and share good practice in learning and teaching across the school.

## CONCLUSION

The school's performance in the focus areas of support for learners and leadership for learning was very good.

The school will be supported to produce an action plan to meet the main recommendations in this report and a progress report will be requested the following session.

Pat Hall  
Senior Quality Improvement Officer  
June 2008

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