

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW

OXGANGS PRIMARY SCHOOL

JUNE 2005

EDINBURGH
THE UNIVERSITY OF

EDINBURGH

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THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

Oxcgangs Primary School is a non denominational primary school built in 1955 which serves the area of south east Edinburgh. The catchment area serves the Colinton Mains, Craiglockhart and Firrhill areas of Edinburgh.

Oxcgangs Primary School has 15 classrooms. The school building also includes a physical education (PE) hall, a dining room and a computer suite. At present a spare classroom is used for expressive arts. Eleven of the classrooms including the nursery are temporary units. In the Spring term, pupils will move to a new building in the present school grounds. The school grounds have an extensive grassed area and a tarmacadamed playground.

The current school roll is 376. There are 13 classes in the school, organised as follows:

Nursery Class								
AM	PM	F/T	P1a	P1b	P2a	P2b	P3a	
29	19	8	21	20	19	22	19	
P3b	P4a	P4b	P5a	P5/6	P6	P7a	P7b	
23	24	24	33	25	31	29	30	
				20/5				

Twenty six district pupils enrolled in P1 in August 2004 and, out of 20 placement requests, 17 district pupils enrolled elsewhere. There were also 15 non-district pupils enrolled in P1.

Absence rates for 2002–2003 was 18 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 20 and 19 respectively. There were three formal exclusions during the same period.

The teaching staff in 2004–2005 was:

Basic Complement	PA/SfL*
17.39 FTE**	1.0 FTE
Visiting Specialist(s)	Absence Cover
0.39 FTE	0.43 FTE

*Positive action/support for learning and special needs

**Full time equivalent

The headteacher (HT) has no teaching commitment and is supported by 1.2 FTE depute headteachers (DHT). There is one principal teacher (PT) and there are visiting teachers for PE, music and information communications technology (ICT).

The pupil teacher ratio is 20:1. In addition, 14 support staff are allocated to a range of whole-school responsibilities.

The HT and all of the teaching staff have entered the professional review scheme. Almost all of the support staff have entered the staff development and review scheme. The remaining support staff will be reviewed by June 2005.

The pupil unit cost for 2003–2004 was £2680, compared to authority and national averages of £2709 and £2586 respectively. There is a School Board and parent teacher association (PTA).

PUPIL ATTAINMENT

National testing in reading, writing and mathematics is fully established at all stages. The school's current performance in relation to national 5–14 attainment targets is:

	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05*
Reading	84%	90%	90%	90%	88%	91%
Writing	70%	85%	83%	82%	85%	85%
Mathematics	80%	82%	85%	78%	87%	86%

* 2005 target

Five pupils, two of whom have a Record of Needs, have been referred to psychological services.

THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The current school development plan covers the period 2002–2005 and targets the following main priorities:

- ✿ 5–14 environmental studies;
- ✿ 5–14 mathematics;
- ✿ 5–14 writing;
- ✿ raising attainment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN);
- ✿ assessment;
- ✿ learning support;
- ✿ developing citizenship;
- ✿ accommodation and facilities;
- ✿ monitoring by senior staff;
- ✿ school self-evaluation procedures; and
- ✿ early years quality assurance.

The review programme based on the standards and quality (S&Q) report comprised two key areas:

- ✿ ethos;
- ✿ management, leadership and quality assurance;

plus the authority theme:

- ✿ continuity and progression in learning including transitions.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

Oxgangs Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Services and Education Support Services Groups of the Education Department during November 2004. The review was based on the school's own S&Q report for session 2003–2004. This was considered by the team to be of a very good quality and to form an acceptable basis for review.

The review team considered statements made by the school about two key areas in the S&Q report, along with the authority theme,

and 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 school development plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, 17 lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a sample of parents.

Seventy-two questionnaires were sent to parents and 28 were returned.

PARENTS' VIEWS

All parents said that:

- ✿ their children enjoyed being at school;
- ✿ their children found the activities stimulating and challenging;
- ✿ their children are encouraged to work to the best of their ability;
- ✿ their children are treated fairly by their teachers;
- ✿ pupils are generally well behaved; and
- ✿ the school had a good reputation in the community.

Almost all parents said that:

- ✿ they knew their if their children were having difficulty they would be helped;
- ✿ they felt that the teacher really knew their children as individuals;
- ✿ the school had explained to them the part they could play in their children's education;
- ✿ they were content with the part they were asked to play in their children's education;
- ✿ they came away from parent-teacher meetings feeling they had learned something useful;
- ✿ teachers dealt effectively with bad behaviour;
- ✿ the school was well led; and

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- ✿ the school had good materials and equipment for learning and teaching.

Most parents said that:

- ✿ they got regular, accurate and helpful information about their children's progress in school work;
- ✿ the school was good in explaining its work to them; and
- ✿ they were confident that if they raised a matter of concern the school would do something about it.

Only a few parents said that the school had good accommodation.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

1 ETHOS

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ Relationships with other local primaries were strong and our probationer teacher benefited from visits to schools in the Firrhill cluster.
- ✿ Very good relationships continued with the Social Work Department, the Reporter to the Children's Panel and local voluntary and statutory agencies.
- ✿ At Oxgangs we judge ethos to be very good.
- ✿ Pupils have maintained a very good sense of identity with the school.
- ✿ The different coloured sweatshirts, introduced to reflect the added responsibilities of P6 and P7 pupils, have continued to be popular.
- ✿ This year has seen the introduction of a nursery sweatshirt and this too has proved a popular venture.
- ✿ Pupil and staff morale has remained commendably high.
- ✿ Parents have continued to support the meet the teacher evening, parent/teacher consultation sessions and the many activities of the PTA.

- ✿ In the first half of the session many more parents than usual have attended board meetings mainly to express their concerns about lack of progress with the building.
- ✿ Open day this year was confined to the infant building and nursery and remained a popular event for parents of pre-school children.
- ✿ Monthly diaries to parents continued and we produced another major newsletter which was distributed to a wider audience.
- ✿ A comments section was added to all of our communications with parents and the lack of negative comments leads us to believe that parents are generally satisfied with this area of our work.
- ✿ Staff worked very hard to maintain ethos and continued to organise a huge amount of activities at a difficult time.
- ✿ A number of successful ventures helped to boost morale.

Overall, the ethos of the school was very good.

Strengths in ethos

Pupils and teachers strongly identified with the school. Morale was high and there was a very purposeful working environment. Teachers had mostly high expectations of pupils' attainment and achievement.

Pupils found their teachers to be approachable and held them in high regard. They also felt that their contributions within the classroom were valued. Pupils showed respect and support for each other and worked cooperatively together during classroom activities.

The quality of staff pupil relationships was very good. Warmth, encouragement and mutual respect were evident from classroom interaction. Teachers had succeeded in creating a positive classroom atmosphere where praise and encouragement were used to very good effect. This provided strong support for learning and the building of pupil confidence.

All staff worked cooperatively to create a climate of positive behaviour management which encouraged care, courtesy and cooperation. Pupils were very positive about the school's efforts to promote positive behaviour. This included a number of effective approaches including golden rules, Circle Time, award certificates and the buddy system.

There were opportunities provided to acknowledge the achievements of pupils in the form of awards, stickers and certificates and in identifying a 'Pupil of the Week' in each class. Pupils considered these to be motivating and rewarding. As a result, pupils had high expectations of themselves and were committed to working to the best of their ability.

Commendably, pupils were afforded a wide variety of opportunities to take responsibility and play an active part in decision-making. The 'Buddy' scheme, Junior Road Safety Officers, monitors, pupil council and visit guides were very effective examples.

Staff had developed and maintained very good working relationships with one another and this had contributed to the team spirit within the school.

Parents had a high opinion of the school and its reputation in the community. The school actively and successfully encouraged parental involvement in pupils' learning by holding 'meet the teacher' evenings, curriculum workshops, use of homework diaries and the parent helper scheme. All of these activities were highly valued by parents. The school also provided good opportunities to involve the wider local community, including the very successful annual May fair and the quiz night.

Although the school communicated with parents on a regular basis through a monthly diary and an occasional newsletter, some parents felt that communication could be strengthened.

Areas for development in ethos

The staff should extend the very positive practice of Circle Time to the nursery.

Parents' views should be sought on ways to further develop communication with, and from, the school.

The HT should now take steps to provide a summary of the school's S&Q report and development plan to every family in the school.

2 MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ We judge this area to be good.
- ✿ The improvement of quality assurance practices has been continued.
- ✿ All teachers were formally observed on the teaching and learning of mental mathematics and writing on two occasions during the year. There have also been many more informal visits to assess pupils' progress.
- ✿ The Care Commission concentrated on the themes of individuals being welcomed and valued, an environment of mutual respect and trust and open communications. Class teachers spent quality time with management staff on an individual basis. On these occasions forward plans were discussed and individual pupils' progress was tracked.
- ✿ Staff were regularly encouraged to use the self assessment techniques encouraged by "How good is our school?".
- ✿ Examples of pupil writing were chosen for assessment by promoted staff.
- ✿ A second probationer teacher had very good induction into the teaching profession. One of the experienced class teachers acted as her mentor and this proved to be a very good staff development opportunity for both the teachers concerned.

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- ❁ Teachers were consulted about the stages at which they would like to teach the following year and this has proved a popular and successful way of providing very good class teaching.
- ❁ The business manager certainly helped to reduce the administrative duties of the promoted staff. She was made line manager for ancillary staff and has made a successful start to carrying out professional review, financial management, school maintenance and other important administrative duties such as disclosure procedure and safety regulations on school excursions.
- ❁ Former classroom assistants, auxiliaries and special needs auxiliaries were renamed "learning assistants". In essence they retained their previous roles. P1, P2, P4b, P5/P6, P7a and P7b all benefited from having an assistant to support learning and teaching.
- ❁ All teachers went through the professional review process with the new City of Edinburgh guidelines being used in the final term.
- ❁ A large number of staff development courses were attended.
- ❁ Teachers were regularly reminded that courses were by no means the only method for self improvement and some took the opportunity of observing learning and teaching in other classrooms and in other schools.
- ❁ One of the tasks in the development plan was to develop a quality assurance framework within the nursery. This work was helped by the nursery's first care commission.

Overall, management, leadership and quality assurance was good.

Strengths in management, leadership and quality assurance

Clear procedures for involving staff in decision-making were in place. Teaching staff considered themselves to be well consulted in this process.

Initiatives and developments arising from the school development planning process were taken forward through groups of staff working cooperatively to review and produce policies, guidelines and materials.

The teaching staff formed a strong team which made key contributions to overall development within the school. There was an effective system in place for regular joint planning meetings between stage partners and with the SfL teacher.

Promoted staff had clear, focused remits and were very effective in supporting and challenging staff within their designated areas. They monitored teachers' forward plans and provided them with helpful feedback, sampled pupils' work and reviewed the results of assessment. As a result of monitoring learning and teaching within the classrooms they also had a good knowledge of teachers' practices across the school.

Professional review and development was firmly established and resulting staff development needs were identified and planned to the satisfaction of staff.

Staff, parents and pupils had a broad understanding of the aims of the school and considered that these underpinned development and practices within the school. The HT consulted parents about the quality of service provided by the school by means of a questionnaire survey. Results of this were used to inform school development planning.

The school had an effective pupil council with representation from all classes from P2 to P7. The council worked well to ensure that pupils were well consulted and made an important contribution to the life of the school.

The HT was an effective leader and provided a clear strategic direction to the school. He was well respected both in and outwith the school and had high personal credibility. He also managed change well, ensuring the cooperation of all staff and he was effective in delegating responsibility so as to develop leadership skills among staff.

Areas for development in management, leadership and quality assurance

Where practicable, support staff should be included in all aspects of consultation and decision-making in order that they feel more fully included in the staff team.

Self-evaluation procedures should be more rigorous and involve auditing the work of the school by taking a closer look at all seven key areas of the school's work by making more rigorous and systematic use of the appropriate quality indicators.

Consideration should be given to involving staff in peer evaluation to enhance the present monitoring programme carried out by promoted staff and to support the sharing of classroom practice.

Through effective self-evaluation, the school's S&Q report should be made more evaluative and contain clear evidence for the judgements arrived at.

The school development plan contained well chosen priorities and good progress was evident in its implementation. However, further work needed to be done to detail tasks and timescales and to ensure that success criteria provided a helpful basis for evaluation. Resources in time, money and materials also needed to be fully costed.

Although staff had some involvement in school planning, attention should be given to engaging them all more fully at each stage of the process in order to secure their full commitment to the plan.

3 CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION IN LEARNING INCLUDING TRANSITIONS

The review team agreed with the following statements from the school's S&Q report:

- ✿ This session we have rewritten our writing policy which contains a programme of work and advice on how to improve pupil output. The appendices contain detailed advice on purpose, form and audience, writing frames, planning, genre, teacher assessment, pupil assessment, the school correction code, spelling and examples of pupil writing at the 5–14 levels.
- ✿ We reviewed our mathematics policy and decided to rewrite it to reflect important changes: The City of Edinburgh Total Numeracy Pack, The City of Edinburgh 5–14 Mathematics Programme of Study for Levels D–E, the school's adoption of Scottish Heinemann Mathematics, the renewed emphasis on mental maths and the introduction of setting in P5. We believe that the development work undertaken ensures that Mathematics 5–14 is being fully covered. P1–P3 teachers examined the links between Total Numeracy and Heinemann Mathematics to ensure that there were no omissions from the Level A 5–14 curriculum and that there was appropriate continuity between P2 and P3.
- ✿ We believe that the staff development work and the changes made to our writing and mathematics policies will provide greater continuity and progression in these subjects.
- ✿ All P6 and P7 pupils learned French and the cluster has appointed a coordinator in French who will meet with representatives from each school next session to ensure that there is greater opportunity and progression from P6 through to S1 and S2.
- ✿ Our development plan concentrated on raising attainment in writing and mathematics. Staff spent much of their development time on those two areas and

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both curriculum policies were revised. This has helped to raise achievement.

- ❁ The performance levels of all pupils were monitored regularly by our promoted staff via our computer database and progress was discussed at regular meetings with class teachers.
- ❁ At all stages pupils are encouraged to work both independently and cooperatively and we judge our success in this area to be very good.
- ❁ Teachers are very good at varying their approaches to learning.
- ❁ Our new writing and mathematics programmes have ensured a more rigorous approach to planning and we judge this to be good.
- ❁ We have continued to use Filemaker Pro for reporting. Feedback from parents have been mixed with some appreciating the detail contained in the report with other finding it somewhat impersonal.
- ❁ In the nursery, because of industrial action by nursery nurses, a reduced pupil profile had to be produced. Parents were very understanding about the reasons for this and appreciated the efforts the school had gone to maintain a rota to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils.
- ❁ The quality of pastoral care is very good. Our positive behaviour strategy is apparent in every classroom and pupils have been involved in devising classroom rules.
- ❁ Teaching and ancillary staff work very hard to maintain a climate where mutual respect and pupil self esteem is paramount.
- ❁ Staff are aware of the social, emotional and physical needs of our pupils and have this year been particularly successful in integrating a number of pupils who have transferred from other schools.
- ❁ A great deal of effort has been spent by staff on supporting a few pupils with behavioural difficulties and parents have been very

much involved in discussions and resultant individualised programmes.

- ❁ Many extra curriculum activities were organised.
- ❁ During the course of the year links with Firrhill High School were strengthened.
- ❁ The science department again organised a series of lessons for P7 pupils after school.
- ❁ The drama department and the mathematics department provided weekly lessons for P7 pupils which we hope will be a great benefit in terms of continuity for our P7 pupils. This scheme was also beneficial in that it provided an opportunity for primary and secondary staff to liaise on a weekly basis.

Overall, continuity and progression including transitions was good.

Strengths in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

Effective arrangements were in place to provide a smooth transition from home to nursery and from nursery to primary. Open days in November and June promoted a strong partnership between home and the nursery.

The school had produced an informative nursery booklet which outlined aims, nursery procedures and a curriculum framework and this supported transition from home to nursery. Staff valued information received from parents and this aided the settling-in process.

The procedures for transition in the early years were very good. The school had clear transition guidelines which ensured that transfer from nursery to P1 was well planned and organised. The school held annual 'meet the teacher meetings' and these further promoted partnership with parents.

Teachers monitored pupil progress so that significant changes in pupils' performance were identified to enable appropriate action to be taken. Teachers were allocated time to enable

dialogue to take place at the hand over of classes between stages. This time was well used to ascertain pupils' progress and to take account of their prior learning when planning for the next stage. This also ensured that children were secure and confident at stage the changes of stage and enabled teachers to plan appropriate class groupings.

Transition arrangements from P7 to S1 with respect to pastoral care were very good and pupils enjoyed a very positive experience. As well as the three day visit for pupils, a week long summer school with a focus on enterprise education was provided annually.

In some instances, staff from the associated secondary school worked closely with the primary pupils. For example, the mathematics department had organised a ten session problem-solving project for all P7 pupils last session. This had greatly enhanced the transition from primary to secondary in this subject area.

Effective links had also been established between primary and secondary staff to ensure that P7 pupils with individualised educational programmes were appropriately provided for when they moved to the secondary sector. Staff also took effective steps to support children who moved to other primary schools.

Areas for development in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

As part of ongoing development whole school curriculum policies should be adapted where necessary to take account of learning in the nursery.

The school should continue to extend the use of formative assessment to ensure that more pupils are provided with suitably challenging learning experiences.

The school had raised awareness regarding gifted and talented pupils. In line with authority policy, steps should now be taken to ensure that such pupils are systematically identified and their learning needs met.

At all stages in the school consideration should be given to providing appropriate opportunities for pupils to exercise choice in their tasks and activities to encourage independent responsibility for their own learning.

The school should now build on its current practice and develop a formal policy for predicting and tracking individual pupil progress through the school.

In partnership with other cluster schools, early action was required to greatly strengthen curricular links with the secondary school in order to ensure progression and continuity in pupils' learning.

SUMMARY

Commendable features

- ✿ All staff worked cooperatively to create a climate of positive behaviour management which encouraged care, courtesy and cooperation.
- ✿ Pupils were afforded a wide variety of opportunities to take responsibility and play an active part in decision-taking.
- ✿ Teachers had created a positive classroom atmosphere which strongly supported pupils' learning.
- ✿ The school actively and successfully encouraged parental involvement in pupils' learning.
- ✿ Initiatives and developments arising from the school development planning process were taken forward through staff working groups.
- ✿ The school had an effective pupil council with representation from all classes from P2 to P7.

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- ❖ The HT was an effective leader and provided a clear strategic direction to the school.
- ❖ Effective arrangements were in place to provide a smooth transition from home to nursery and from nursery to primary.
- ❖ Transition arrangements from P7 to S1 with respect to pastoral care were very good and pupils enjoyed a very positive experience.

Areas for development by the school

- ❖ Support staff should be included where practicable in all aspects of consultation and decision-making in the interests of inclusion.
- ❖ Self-evaluation should be made more rigorous by taking a closer look at all seven key areas of the school's work through systematic use of the appropriate quality indicators.
- ❖ Through effective self-evaluation, the school's S&Q report should be made more evaluative and contain clear evidence for the judgements arrived at.
- ❖ The monitoring and evaluation of teachers' classroom practice should be strengthened by increasing its frequency and by more systematic use of the relevant quality indicators.
- ❖ The school should work in partnership with other cluster schools to greatly strengthen curricular links with the secondary school in order to ensure progression and continuity in pupils' learning.
- ❖ The school should now build on its current practice and develop a formal policy for predicting and tracking individual pupil progress through the school.

CONCLUSION

The school's self-evaluation, as represented in its S&Q report, was considered to be a good reflection of the current development position.

Areas for development by the authority

- ❖ The school should be supported to produce an action plan to meet the recommendations in this report.
- ❖ Support should be provided to help to continue to strengthen aspects of school self-evaluation, particularly in relation to learning and teaching.
- ❖ Examples of good practice should be entered in the database of good practice to enable their wider dissemination to other schools.

Very good:	Major Strengths
Good:	Strengths outweigh weaknesses
Fair:	Some important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	Major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	Less than 15%



