

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW

PIRNIEHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

MAY 2008

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

Pirniehall Primary School is a non-denominational primary school built in 2003 which serves the area of north Edinburgh. The catchment area comprises mainly council accommodation.

The current school roll is 175, with a nursery of 48 places, eight of which are full time. There are eight classes in the school. The pupil teacher ratio is 20:1.

Seven district pupils enrolled in P1 in August 2007 and 17 district pupils enrolled elsewhere. There were also 21 non-district pupils enrolled in P1.

The absence rate for 2006–2007 was 30 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 18. There was one formal exclusion during the period.

The pupil unit cost for 2006–2007 was £3818, compared to authority and national averages of £3228 and £3422 respectively. There is a Parent Forum and parent teacher association (PTA).

PUPIL ATTAINMENT

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

	2005	2006	2007
Reading	46%	53%	59%
Writing	38%	53%	58%
Mathematics	53%	54%	62%

REVIEW PROCEDURES

Pirniehall Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Development and Neighbourhood Management Groups of the Children and Families Department during January 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:

- ✿ learning and teaching; 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, 12 lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a 20% sample of parents.

Seventy six questionnaires were sent to parents and 30 were returned.

Verbal questionnaires were carried out with sample groups of pupils.

PARENTS' / CARERS' VIEWS

- ✿ All parents found staff approachable and easy to talk to about problems and issues. They were confident that staff would deal with any concerns effectively. All parents were confident that learning needs were addressed in class and through additional support provided when required. They were able to communicate effectively with staff regarding their child's progress through comments and feedback in the homework diary.
- ✿ Almost all parents felt they received regular and informative information about wider school issues through the newsletter.

- ✿ All parents in the nursery felt confident that they could approach staff informally on a daily basis to discuss issues relating to their child. However, a few felt that they would like more information on what their children were doing and the progress they were making in areas of the curriculum.

PUPILS' VIEWS

- ✿ All pupils spoke of their enjoyment at being in school and agreed that they were treated fairly and staff were always willing to help them. All pupils knew their teachers wanted them to work hard and they always received help when they had difficulties.
- ✿ Pupils stated they felt safe in school, they enjoyed being there. They said that there was no bullying in the school and only a few children misbehaved in class. They also appreciated being involved in decision-making and enjoyed being able to influence the work of the school through the pupil council. All pupils spoke very positively about the weekly golden assemblies celebrating the wider achievement of pupils throughout the school. They were also proud of the many projects organised and supported by the school eco group, in particular the weekly collection and recycling of waste paper.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

1 LEARNING AND TEACHING

The review team considered the following quality indicators from 'How good is our school? 3' and Child at the Centre 2:

- 2.1 Learners' experiences
- 5.2 Teaching for effective learning
- 5.3 Assessment for learning
- 9.2 Leadership and direction

Overall learning and teaching was judged to be very good.

Strengths in learning and teaching

The school provided learning and teaching of a high quality. There was a focus on the needs of pupils, on creating the most appropriate learning environment and on providing pupils with opportunities to develop their potential. Classrooms and corridors contained high quality displays of pupils' work which contributed well to the stimulating learning environment.

Pupils were motivated and enthusiastic about their learning experiences and settled quickly into lessons. Pupils in all classes worked well and participated actively in their own learning. They listened attentively, were enthusiastic in response and showed a good understanding of what they had been taught. Pupils' contributions were openly valued, discussion was used well to promote learning and excellent use was made of praise to reinforce success.

Pupils had a strong voice in the school through the pupil council. They were able to give their opinions, share information with other pupils and be involved in decision making. Pupils had contributed ideas using suggestion boxes.

Pupils were offered a wide range of opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility. Commendably, they supported younger pupils as book buddies and information communications technology (ICT) buddies, helping younger pupils develop their reading and ICT skills. They had also been trained as effective befrienders to help at playtime and lunchtime and assist whole school activities such as sports day.

The eco group had been successfully involved in promoting recycling, minimising waste and saving energy and sharing information with the whole school at assembly. The school has achieved bronze, silver and the Green Flag award. Pupil road safety officers organised activities, made posters to involve and inform other pupils and liaised with visitors from other agencies such as the police. The school has

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

achieved the Gold standard award for Road Safety. The school was also making very good progress as a Health Promoting School and was one of a small number of schools currently working towards stage 3 accreditation.

There was a very good range of high quality formative assessment strategies observed during lessons. All teachers shared the purposes of lessons with pupils and explanations were clear and built on prior learning. In most classes pupil targets were clearly displayed, pupils were aware of these. Teachers referred to these targets during lessons. The formative assessment strategy two stars and a wish was used to set individual pupil targets. These strategies were effective in ensuring that pupils were consistently encouraged to reflect on their progress and consider their next steps in learning.

There was skilled use of questioning and provision of quality feedback to engage pupils in the learning process. Pupils were given regular opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and in groups and worked well without close supervision. Teaching approaches were varied and took good account of differing learning styles. A particularly skilful example of this had been seen in the P2/P3 class where the teacher actively involved the pupils through the use of hand puppets and photographs to set the scene, reinforce key aspects of the lesson and maintain interest and attention throughout the lesson.

There was evidence of very effective use of ICT in some classes. Smartboards had been installed in each of the classrooms and were being used in a variety of ways to support learning. Pupils had been given opportunities to work interactively with the board and in some classes this was done very well. However, there was a need to develop a more consistent, whole-school approach regarding the use of ICT.

Play and active learning was valued and seen

as an integral part of learning and teaching in the early years. Early years' classrooms were equipped with a selection of appropriate play resources to support learning and teaching. Pupils in P1 had opportunities to play mathematics and number games and had the use of an attractive and well stocked book corner. Brain Gym exercises were used effectively to help children concentrate and remain focused on their learning. The shared corridor space was put to good use as an area where pupils engaged in role playing activities. The smartboard was available during free play and pupils were encouraged to use it to consolidate work. Pupils in P1 were very aware of their personal targets. These were attractively displayed and children were reminded of them daily.

Commendably, early years pupils were familiar with the formative assessment strategies applied throughout the school. Staff consistently shared learning intentions and strategies such as two stars and a wish and wait time and pupils clearly understood what they meant and why they were being used. The science teacher had established a variety of reward systems to help children stay focused on their learning, including scientist of the week, and children responded well to these strategies.

The headteacher's (HTs) strong commitment to learning and teaching was demonstrated through her high visibility throughout the school and her active participation in classrooms. She regularly observed how pupils were taught and gave feedback, support and advice to the staff.

The HT was confident and experienced in developing leadership across the school and focused on building an effective team. Deliberate emphasis had been placed on developing distributive leadership. Staff had been encouraged to take forward initiatives and many welcomed the opportunity to take on

new and additional leadership responsibilities, thereby allowing them to take a lead role within or beyond the classroom. Responsibilities for Assessment is for Learning (AifL), learning and teaching, ICT, eco school, health, pupil council and Parent Forum had been distributed among staff. Staff had welcomed these opportunities to develop personally and professionally and felt valued and included as a result.

All staff worked very effectively as a team to support each other and share skills and resources to ensure that the needs of pupils were met at all times. The HT gave regular praise and encouragement to her staff and promoted an open door policy for staff to talk about issues or concerns. The HT and senior team had a very good knowledge of the skills and expertise of staff and used this knowledge effectively in their deployment.

The HT and principal teacher met regularly on both a formal and informal basis to focus on priorities for improvement and to ensure that learning remained at the heart of the improvement agenda within the school. All staff were part of the consultation process to identify school improvement priorities and they were also involved in evaluating progress made towards meeting these priorities. Most staff had the opportunity to attend collegiate activity time (CAT) sessions and all staff had undertaken appropriate professional development and were offered regular opportunities to extend their experience.

Areas for development in learning and teaching

Continue to develop the use of ICT throughout the school.

Review the organisation and layout of resources in the nursery to support the learning and teaching needs of all children.

2 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

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

- 5.3 Meeting learning needs
- 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

Learning activities were well matched to pupils' needs and resources were used imaginatively to enhance learning. In almost all classes, tasks and activities were differentiated to take account of the learning needs of individual pupils. Setting pupils in ability groups across classes for mathematics and writing had allowed teachers to tailor the pace of learning and teaching to the needs of the groups. Class teachers liaised regularly to share information and to plan next steps in learning. This had resulted in increased motivation and levels of engagement and had a positive effect on attainment. All pupils were aware of the level they were working on and had a clear understanding of what they needed to do to achieve the next level. Class targets were clearly displayed around the classroom and were well used.

Learning needs were systematically identified through evidence obtained from teacher observation, and a range of tests including national assessments. The additional support for learning policy was contemporary and in line with authority guidelines. All staff knew their pupils very well, took good account of their needs and worked well together to support them. The very able learning assistants were very effectively deployed, there was very good close cooperation with class teachers, and they made a very significant contribution to pupils' learning. They were also skilled in dealing with children with behavioural difficulties and helped calm difficult situations quickly.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

For pupils with individual needs, there was effective and well-planned support from the support for learning teacher. She provided valuable support and advice to staff, she was an active member of the additional support for learning group and regularly reviewed the learning targets of pupils with additional support plans (ASPs) and individualised educational programmes. Pupil learning support records were updated regularly and highlighted the needs of pupils and the results of diagnostic assessments and targets. The quality of information held about each child and the presentation of it was very good.

The school had developed very effective arrangements for partnership working and team development. A wide range of professionals from a range of agencies were actively involved in the work of the school. Their work was allocated and reviewed by the pupil support group. They also contributed to the formation of ASPs which were of a high standard and contained clear learning targets for pupils.

The school had a warm, caring and inclusive ethos. All staff were committed to meeting the pastoral, welfare and educational needs of pupils. They were clearly aware of the need for support for children and their families as well as providing the best learning and teaching experiences.

The commitment of all staff to addressing barriers to learning and the way school staff worked with visiting support staff to provide rich and inclusive educational experiences for all pupils was considered to be excellent.

Health promotion was integral to the life and work of the school and this had been recognised through the award of the second level of accreditation as a health promoting school. The school breakfast club, based in the dining hall, served a selection of healthy food to children who arrived early at school, before formal

lessons began. Attendance at the breakfast club provided a good start to the day, leaving the children more settled, attentive and motivated to learn. This also created the opportunity for informal interaction between pupils and school staff.

The school had developed an appropriate range of pastoral care and welfare policies, including child protection, anti-bullying and equal opportunities. Staff had a good understanding of their own roles and responsibilities in relation to these policies. They were alert to welfare issues and effectively recorded and passed on concerns. All staff had recently attended update training in child protection.

A successful nurture class had been established to support the needs of identified pupils in P1 and P2. Pupils had benefited and enjoyed the experience. Staff and parents provided a strong endorsement of the value of the class. Pupils' emotional and learning needs were very successfully met and the teacher knew the children well and planned appropriate experiences. Good liaison occurred between all the teachers involved with the class, plans were shared regularly and next steps were clearly identified and recorded. The group membership was flexible and children were integrated into their base class when ready. A variety of learning and teaching approaches had been adopted according to the needs of the children within the group. A very good selection of appropriate play materials was available to support learning and teaching and children had very good opportunities to engage in active learning.

The HT had a clear focus on raising attainment along with a commitment to each child receiving a high quality learning experience. She recognised the importance of providing a high level of support for emotional and pastoral needs. Pirniehall had been asked to be one of the pilot schools for the 'Creating Confident

Staff" aspect of the "Growing Confidence" project which promotes and supports the emotional well being of staff. She maintained a high profile around the school and demonstrated a very good knowledge of all aspects of the school's provision.

The HT communicated effectively with staff through one-to-one discussion on a formal and informal basis. There were regular planned meetings with staff and daily information was shared on the whiteboard in the staffroom.

Areas for development in support for learners

Continue to develop personal learning planning across the whole school.

Nursery planning should be more closely informed by assessment information.

SUMMARY

Commendable features

- ✿ The effective leadership of the headteacher.
- ✿ The contribution made by learners to the life of the school.
- ✿ The way in which formative assessment strategies have been embedded into classroom practice. These included sharing learning intentions, individual target setting and checking how well success criteria had been met. Learning and teaching approaches also took good account of pupils' different learning styles.
- ✿ The sector leading work carried out by the school and visiting support staff to provide rich and inclusive educational experiences for all pupils.
- ✿ The commitment to the nurture group, and to play and active learning in early years.
- ✿ The very strong commitment to the celebration of wider achievement.

- ✿ The excellent partnership and multi-agency approach aimed at meeting the needs of all learners.

Areas for development by the school

- ✿ Continue to develop ICT throughout the school.
- ✿ Continue to develop personal learning planning across the whole school.
- ✿ Review the organisation and layout of resources in the nursery to support the learning and teaching needs of all children.
- ✿ Nursery planning should be more closely informed by assessment information.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the school's performance in both learning and teaching and support for learners 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.

Graeme Thompson
Quality Improvement Officer
May 2008

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

