

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW

ST NINIAN'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

JULY 2005

EDINBURGH
THE UNIVERSITY OF

EDINBURGH

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THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

St Ninian's RC Primary School is a denominational primary school built in the 1930s which serves the area of north east Edinburgh. The catchment area covers Abbeyhill, Meadowbank, Restalrig, Lochend and Craighentenny.

St Ninian's RC Primary School has 11 classrooms. The school building also includes a parents' room, a time-out room, a medical room, a resource room, a library, a science room, a support for learning (SfL) teachers' room and base, a computer suite, and an after school/breakfast club. The school grounds have a covered play/storage area and a meadow.

The current school roll is 287. There are 11 classes in the school, organised as follows:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|-----|--------|---------|----|----|
| Nursery Class | | | | | | |
| AM | PM | F/T | P1 | P1/2 | P2 | P3 |
| 18 | 15 | 8 | 24 | 20 | 26 | 27 |
| | | | | (10/10) | | |
| P3/4 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P6/7 | P7 | |
| 23 | 21 | 29 | 24 | 25 | 27 | |
| (10/13) | | | (8/17) | | | |

Twenty nine district pupils enrolled in P1 in August 2004 and no district pupils enrolled elsewhere. There were also five non-district pupils enrolled in P1.

Absence rates for 2003-2004 was 25 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 18. There was one formal exclusion during the same period.

The teaching staff in 2004-2005 was:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Basic Complement | PA/SfL* |
| 12.60 FTE** plus 0.63FTE reduction in class contact time | 1.54 FTE |
| Visiting Specialist(s) | Absence Cover |
| 0.33 FTE | 0.39 FTE |

*Positive action

**Full time equivalent

The headteacher (HT) has a teaching commitment of one afternoon per week teaching in P6 and is supported by the depute headteacher (DHT). There is one principal teacher (PT) and there is a visiting teacher for art.

The pupil teacher ratio is 18:1. In addition, 16 support staff are allocated to a range of whole-school responsibilities.

The HT and all members of the teaching and support staff have entered the professional review and staff development and review schemes.

The pupil unit cost for 2003-2004 was £2926, compared to authority and national averages of £2858 and £2866 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 | 67% | 70% | 65% | 73% | 71% | 71% |
| Writing | 56% | 65% | 61% | 67% | 74% | 69% |
| Mathematics | 69% | 67% | 67% | 64% | 74% | 71% |

* 2005 target

Eleven pupils, four 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 2004-2005 and targets the following main priorities:

- ✧ to ensure that teaching plans are concise and clear;

- ❁ to audit, plan and implement a health education programme with a view to becoming a health promoting school;
- ❁ to integrate information communications technology (ICT) into all areas of the curriculum;
- ❁ to agree quality programmes for listening and talking, mathematics, modern languages, personal and social development (PSD) and expressive arts, reading, writing, environmental studies, and citizenship;
- ❁ to raise overall levels of attendance and attainment;
- ❁ to create an ethos of achievement when meeting the needs of able pupils;
- ❁ to have a whole school approach to assessment, record keeping and reporting;
- ❁ to identify and meet the teaching and learning needs of all pupils;
- ❁ to address the pastoral needs of pupils;
- ❁ to develop links with the parish, the community and the cluster.
- ❁ to enhance school ethos;
- ❁ to involve parents in their child's learning and in the work and life of the school;
- ❁ to develop the use of the library, the playground and the staff resource area;
- ❁ to establish a strong, happy and motivated school team through involving all members of staff in the creation of the development plan, implementing the agreed action and assessing progress;
- ❁ to agree roles and remits for the management team in order to advise on the curriculum, advise on classroom organisation and methodology, and monitor learning and teaching; and
- ❁ to build on current good practice in the nursery.

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

St Ninian's RC Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Services and Education Support Services Groups of the Education Department during February 2005. The review was based on the school's own S&Q report for session 2003-2004. This was considered by the team 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, parents, and members of the parish and community, and observed learning and teaching. In total, 26 lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a sample of parents.

Fifty two questionnaires were sent to parents and 14 were returned.

Thirty four questionnaires were sent to parents in the nursery with no returns.

PARENTS' VIEWS

Almost all parents said that:

- ❁ their child enjoyed being at school;
- ❁ their child found the activities stimulating and challenging;
- ❁ their child was treated fairly by his/her teachers;
- ❁ the school was good at explaining its work to them;

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- ❖ they were confident that if they raised a matter of concern the school would do something about it;
- ❖ they were content with the part they were asked to play in their child's education;
- ❖ they came away from parent-teacher meetings feeling that they had learned something useful;
- ❖ pupils were generally well behaved;
- ❖ the school was well led;
- ❖ the school had good accommodation;
- ❖ the school had good materials and equipment for learning and teaching; and
- ❖ the school had a good reputation in the community.

Most parents said that:

- ❖ their child was encouraged to work to the best of his/her ability;
- ❖ they were satisfied with the homework their child received;
- ❖ they knew that if their child was having difficulty he/she would be helped;
- ❖ they felt the teacher really knew their child as an individual; and
- ❖ the school had explained to them what part they could play in their child's education.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

1 ETHOS

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

- ❖ The wearing of uniform is rewarded weekly.
- ❖ Staff have spent the session promoting the school badge and the school colours.
- ❖ Pupils' achievements are recognised and rewarded in class and at whole school assemblies. The school's reward systems have been effective.
- ❖ There is an agreed positive behaviour policy and consistent practices to support the behaviour of pupils.

- ❖ There is an agreed new practice for ensuring attendance and promoting good punctuality.

Overall, the ethos of the school was very good.

Strengths in ethos

Almost all pupils wore school uniform and showed a pride in belonging to the school community. Pupil behaviour was good both in class and around the school. Teachers and pupils interacted well with each other.

The commitment and hard work of staff was appreciated and acknowledged by parents and by the management team.

Pupils responded very positively to the introduction of the rewards system and the new house structure. Achievement was celebrated in class and at assemblies. Pupils enjoyed the additional responsibilities they were given as pupil council members, house captains, prefects and buddies.

Positive behaviour management approaches were clearly displayed in all classrooms. There was good use of praise within the learning and teaching activities.

The whole school approach to Circle Time supported the development of pupils' self esteem and helped to promote positive behaviour. This was reinforced by effective use of golden rules and Golden Time across the school.

Clear procedures were in place to ensure attendance and punctuality. Good habits were promoted through newsletters, at assemblies and in the PSD curriculum in classes.

Areas for development in ethos

The school should continue to focus on raising attainment, promoting achievement and celebrating success.

The school should continue, as planned, to emphasise positive contributions, positive

attitudes and positive achievements among staff and pupils, and should build on the existing good team work amongst staff.

2 MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

- ❁ All members of the management team have agreed roles and remits.
- ❁ The staff have written and audited the development plan. How good is our school? 2 was used as a tool for self-evaluation.
- ❁ Regular evaluation of pupils' work is done when the jotters and written classwork are monitored by the management team.
- ❁ Diagnostic assessment, national assessments, forward plans, goals and aims are discussed and monitored by the management team.
- ❁ All members of staff had the opportunity to be involved in working parties.

Overall, management, leadership and quality assurance was good.

Strengths in management, leadership and quality assurance

There was a strong management team who worked well together to take the school forward. Staff were aware of the roles and responsibilities of the HT, the DHT and the PT. Staff, parents, and pupils had confidence in the HT and the management team, who were seen as approachable, knowledgeable, and committed to developing the school's capacity to improve.

Teaching and non-teaching staff had been involved in auditing and writing the current development plan. A wide range of working parties had been set up to take forward the identified priorities. Commendably, the working party for homework was established in response to concerns raised in the recent parental

questionnaire and included parents as active members of the group.

A good start had been made to the process of self-evaluation. Consultation had involved staff, pupils and parents. Discussion in stage groups and in working parties had contributed well to the broad view audit.

The HT and DHT regularly monitored pupils' work and provided positive and constructive comments in pupils' jotters. Monitoring of forward plans in both the nursery and the primary school was thorough, and written feedback was comprehensive and helpful.

Areas for development in management, leadership and quality assurance

The school should develop the process of improvement planning so that the broad overview is balanced by a manageable number of key priorities each year.

Self-evaluation procedures should be further developed. The school should take a closer look at identified priorities in order to inform future improvement planning. Progress in the nursery should be included in the S&Q report.

The remits of working parties should reflect the key improvement plan priorities. Clear procedures for disseminating information and sharing the progress of working parties should be developed. The management team should proceed, as planned, to improve strategies for communication with staff to ensure good quality feedback and regular sharing of information.

The management team should proceed, as planned, to formalise procedures for monitoring and evaluating pupils' work and for sharing classroom experience. As planned, this should include discussing and agreeing criteria and providing written and verbal feedback to staff. Consideration should be given to offering further opportunities for peer evaluation.

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3 CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION IN LEARNING INCLUDING TRANSITIONS

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

- ❁ Coherence and consistency have been developed by focusing initially on the content of the curricular programmes.
- ❁ A cluster working party agreed a programme in French and Italian from P4–P7. This programme should maximise transition in modern languages.
- ❁ Staff have worked with colleagues outwith school to integrate interactive methods and programmes to effectively teach 5–14 mathematics.
- ❁ A new progressive skills programme in ICT has been introduced.
- ❁ There was a very effective nursery to P1 transition.
- ❁ Older children were buddied with nursery children who would come into P1. This was introduced to make their transition smoother.

Overall continuity and progression in learning including transitions was good.

Strengths in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

A coherent and consistent approach had been adopted through the introduction of agreed curricular programmes and resources across most areas of the 5-14 curriculum.

Assessment records provided a clear record of pupils' progress, especially in spelling and mathematics.

The whole school environmental studies programme, based on the recommended authority 5–14 programme, was implemented consistently and provided breadth, balance, and good progression for pupils' learning.

Good daily plans were evident throughout the school, supported in some cases by the day's plan being set out for pupils in the classroom. Learning outcomes were clearly stated in teachers' plans, ensuring progression and development in daily learning and teaching. Daily and weekly plans provided a good focus for the balance and allocation of curricular time.

There was a very good programme in place for both French and Italian, in line with the cluster policy for modern languages. Coverage of topics and resources had been commonly agreed to ensure progression and continuity between the primary and the secondary school.

The programme for mathematics provided good progression and continuity for pupils' learning. The new 5-14 planning sheets were well matched to national guidelines and had been well developed by an external consultant for the school. New resources were giving very good support to the programme and setting was supporting pupils' progress and attainment.

The new ICT programme had been implemented successfully, particularly in the upper stages of the school. This programme was gradually becoming embedded in the curriculum, and there was clear evidence that pupils' skills had improved.

The transition from nursery to P1 was very strong. There was a clear programme in place, well supported by the Family Learning project. A range of helpful booklets had been provided for parents and children, including leaflets with comments from former nursery children.

Nursery children were well supported by P6 buddies as they moved into P1. Each new pupil was paired with one or two buddies who provided a familiar face in the playground and a point of contact in the primary school. Both the younger and the older pupils benefitted from this scheme.

Areas for development in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

There should be an evaluation across the school of the usefulness of published programmes, resources and assessment tools. The school should then agree a staged programme to review their 3-14 curricular policies.

A more consistent approach to evaluation within forward plans should be developed. This should include specific reference to next steps in pupils' learning.

The school should continue, as planned, to develop the transition programme for P7 to S1. Curricular links should be strengthened following the good practice established in modern languages.

A summative report for three year olds should be compiled at the end of each year.

The programme for environmental studies should be further developed, as planned, to support composite classes. Formative and summative approaches to assessment should be included in topic areas.

SUMMARY

Commendable features

- ✿ The combined knowledge and skills of the HT and the DHT.
- ✿ The hard work and commitment of the staff.
- ✿ The polite and responsive pupils.
- ✿ The strong links between the school and the community.
- ✿ The very good cluster programme for modern languages.

Areas for development by the school

- ✿ Prioritise initiatives within the development plan so that all staff are aware of the key priorities and of progress with each initiative.

- ✿ Continue to develop reflective and systematic self-evaluation procedures, and to include sharing classroom experience within a formal monitoring and evaluation programme.
- ✿ Plan a phased review of curricular policies following a comprehensive evaluation of each curricular area in turn.
- ✿ Implement a consistent approach to evaluation and indication of next steps in forward plans.

CONCLUSION

The school's self-evaluation, as represented in its S&Q report, was considered to be mostly well-judged. Overall, the school's S&Q report is 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.
- ✿ Examples of good practice should be entered in the database of good practice to enable their wider dissemination to other schools.

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|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 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% |

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