

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL REVIEW
VICTORIA PRIMARY SCHOOL

MARCH 2006

•EDINBURGH•
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

Victoria Primary School is a non-denominational primary school built in 1844 which serves the area of north Edinburgh. The school has a relatively small catchment area serving mainly the village of Newhaven and some of the surrounding properties. This area comprises a mixture of private and council-owned premises.

Victoria Primary School has seven classrooms. The school building also includes an information communications technology (ICT) suite, a library, a dining room, and a gym/assembly hall. The school grounds have a playground and garden area.

The current school roll is 118. There are six classes in the school.

The absence rate for 2003–2004 was 17 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 18. There were no formal exclusions during the period.

The headteacher (HT) is supported by one principal teacher (PT) and there are visiting teachers for music and swimming.

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

The pupil unit cost for 2004–2005 was £3592, 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:

	2003	2004	2005	2005 target
Reading	69%	72%	70%	84%
Writing	59%	66%	63%	73%
Mathematics	67%	71%	79%	84%

REVIEW PROCEDURES

Victoria Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Development and Neighbourhood Management Groups of the Children and Families Department during October 2005. The review was based on the school's own standards and quality (S&Q) report for session 2004–2005. This was considered by the team to form an acceptable basis for review.

The review programme based on the S&Q report comprised two key areas:

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

plus the authority theme:

- ✿ continuity and progression in learning including transitions.

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 improvement plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, 15 lessons were observed. Overall learning and teaching was very good.

Fifty seven questionnaires were sent to parents and 16 were returned.

PARENTS'/CARERS' VIEWS

All parents/carers said that: their child enjoyed being at school, found the activities stimulating and challenging, and was encouraged to work to the best of his/her ability. They also said that the school had good materials and equipment

for learning and teaching and that children were generally well behaved.

Almost all said that the school was well led, had good accommodation and a good reputation in the community. They also said that they were content with the part they were asked to play in their child's education and were satisfied that their child would be treated fairly and helped if in difficulty.

Most were satisfied with the communication they had with the school about their child's progress and welfare.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

1 ETHOS

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

- ✿ There is a very welcoming atmosphere in the school.
- ✿ The school has a very good reputation in the community.
- ✿ Children have a strong sense of identity with, and pride in, the school.
- ✿ There is very good cooperative working between staff and pupils.
- ✿ There are good opportunities to celebrate pupil success.
- ✿ Pupils have an increased and effective role in the work and life of the school.

Overall ethos was very good.

Strengths in ethos

The HT and staff played a major role in establishing a positive ethos within the school. Staff morale was high and parents felt welcomed in the school and considered the staff to be very approachable and willing to listen. Former pupils, of all ages, maintained strong links with the school.

Parents were clearly valued and a number were involved in helping in classes. Good systems of two-way communication were in place. The

HT operated an open door policy, regular and informative newsletters were produced and parents were invited to meet with staff both formally and informally throughout the year. Parents particularly appreciated the "meet the teacher" evening. The school actively welcomed partnership with the community.

The PTA and School Board actively supported the work of the school. The PTA organised and contributed to a wide range of activities, which were well supported and enjoyed by parents and the community.

Children interviewed, felt strongly that teachers were "fair, kind and helpful".

The School Board had produced an attractive newsletter providing helpful information for new parents. It also produced a regular news update to keep parents informed. School Board meetings were well organised and well attended.

The school positively promoted equality, fairness and inclusion.

Overall, pupils' behaviour was good and staff handled discipline matters sensitively. Praise was used effectively throughout the school to support and motivate pupils. A positive behaviour policy was in place with some whole school expectations outlined.

Almost all pupils had a sense of pride in the school and were helpful and courteous to visitors. Prefects carried out their particular duties, such as buddying and being special helpers, very well and with a clear sense of duty.

Children's achievements were recognised and celebrated through verbal praise, attractive displays, awards and certificates distributed during weekly assemblies and through the Achievement 2005 board, 'Roll of Honour Board' and 'Wonderful Outstanding Work' (WOW) notice board in the entrance area. Pupils had also been involved in writing and recording a school song

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and producing a 'This is our School' DVD to be sent to pen pals in a school in Berlin.

Pupils had a range of opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility. A well organised and well-managed pupil council with representation from all classes from P2 to P7 provided an effective means of involving pupils in decision-making within the school.

Pupil relationships with each other were very good. The real sense of community extended to the playground and garden area, where almost all children demonstrated very good social skills at break time. Older pupils provided very effective support and encouragement for younger pupils through the 'Playtime With P7' project.

This project started as part of the Active Schools initiative, had proved very successful, and was well led by a learning assistant. A thorough training programme ensured that the pupils were well prepared to support younger pupils.

There were high standards and expectations in all aspects of the life of the school and these were consistently reflected in the work of all teachers and support staff.

The school and its environment was very well maintained and the classes and rooms were clean and bright with excellent displays.

The school was at the heart of the community and facilities were used extensively in the evenings and at weekends for clubs, sports and, currently, church services.

Areas for development in ethos

The school should continue with its excellent approaches to establishing such a positive ethos.

The HT and working group should update the equality and fairness policy.

The HT and working group should review the positive behaviour strategies and policy to ensure consistency across the whole school.

2 MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

- ✿ There is good monitoring and evaluation of teacher's programmes of study.
- ✿ There is a very good consultation and development process leading to production of plans, policies and programmes.
- ✿ Staff with additional responsibilities make a significant contribution.
- ✿ There is very good collaborative working between the small management team and staff.

Overall management and leadership was very good.

Strengths in management, leadership and quality assurance

The HT and PT were a strong management team who worked effectively together to lead the school. They had developed very good working relations with staff, parents and pupils.

The HT sought out and developed productive partnerships in the immediate and wider community and had very good relationships with pupils, parents, staff and appropriate agencies.

Positive steps were taken to gather the views of parents, pupils and others about the quality of service provided by the school. The pupil council and School Board were very active in helping to ensure that there was effective communication and consultation with key people and groups. Effective action was taken in response to these and to other comments.

There were good procedures for monitoring teachers' plans and evaluating pupils' classroom experiences through formal meetings and a good structure of sharing classroom experience.

The business manager assisted by a number of committed support staff made a significant contribution to the effective running of the school.

Support staff were consulted about their roles and responsibilities and deployed effectively according to their strengths and the needs of the children.

The standards and quality and improvement plan was well organised and provided a clear and easy-to-read summary of aims, audit and action. It accurately summarised key strengths, areas for development and progress made in achieving previous development priorities. The action section provided a strategy for improvement in key areas over a number of years along with well-chosen annual priority projects. Staff participated actively in the development and review of policies and guidelines. Related action plans identified how priorities were to be implemented and objectives met. Good progress was being made towards meeting current objectives.

The HT monitored teachers' plans, evaluated pupils' classroom experiences and tracked pupils' attainment and evaluated their progress. He monitored the effectiveness of the good range of working groups led by class teachers.

A good system of monitoring classroom practice had been established and all staff were fully involved and committed to this process.

Self evaluation was deemed to be good.

The HT, very ably supported by the PT, provided a clear strategic direction based on a vision which took into account the views and needs of all those with a stake in the life of the school. He had a wide range of relevant personal qualities and interpersonal skills, including the ability to create confidence and motivate and inspire others. Staff felt supported and valued.

The professional development programme for teaching and support staff was well thought-out to meet the needs of staff and school priorities. Dissemination of information and staff development was delivered effectively through staff meetings and related in-house courses.

Visiting specialists were deployed effectively and in-school expertise used well to cover aspects of the curriculum such as in the creative arts.

Staff with additional responsibilities were fully consulted on their roles and responsibilities and had clearly defined and understood remits.

Shared responsibilities, including aspects of job share, team teaching and team approaches to new developments were managed effectively and ensured well-coordinated services and support for pupils.

Annual teacher reviews were effective in identifying staff strengths and areas for development. Staff attended a good range of professional development courses linked with the improvement plan.

Inservice days were organised and used effectively to ensure all staff were involved in the annual audit of progress with school plans. Staff and working groups had clear and well-focused remits. Most had agreed additional areas of responsibility and time was set aside when possible to share information.

Areas for development in management, leadership and quality assurance

The HT should formalise the process of self-evaluation building on the good progress made in classroom observation and professional review.

The school should review communication links within the school and with parents.

The HT and working groups should continue to review and update learning and teaching policies and strategies to further take account of: Assessment is for Learning (AifL), children's learning styles, behaviour management, target setting and the use of ICT.

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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:

- ✿ Induction and transfer arrangements are very good.
- ✿ There are good early literacy and early numeracy schemes.
- ✿ The modern languages programme including cluster liaison is very good.
- ✿ Staff awareness of the emotional and social needs of pupils in their care was very good.
- ✿ Teachers' assessment information is good.

Overall continuity and progression in learning, including transitions, was very good.

Strengths in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

The school had developed some very good procedures to ensure a smooth transition for children entering P1 and some very good links had been established with local pre-5 centres.

Staff had clearly taken account of children's written profiles and early assessments to ensure appropriate learning experiences were offered to those children who had particular strengths, for example by adapting the reading scheme for a child in P1 who was already a confident reader.

Very good arrangements were in place to transfer pupil information from stage to stage in the school thus ensuring effective progression for pupils.

Class teachers engaged in structured meetings at the end of each session to ensure the transfer of significant pupil information to receiving teachers. Individual pupil profiles containing samples of work gathered throughout the session provided accumulative records of progress and achievement from P1 to P7.

There were very good arrangements for progression between the primary and secondary school. Cluster collaboration was very good. All

transfer information was reliable and accurate which allowed core subjects to build effectively from prior learning. Very good common cluster teaching topics or approaches included: AifL, enterprise, World War 2 and modern languages.

The Working Together team provided very good support to pupils during the final term of P7 prior to entering S1 at Trinity Academy.

Good relationships had been established with other agencies to support the needs of children and families. Where appropriate, individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were in place. However these needed to be reviewed in line with authority guidelines. The visiting teacher support service (VTSS) was used to support needs and advice and strategies were clearly being implemented.

The support for learning (SfL) teacher and learning assistants made positive contributions to supporting pupils with additional needs throughout the school. Although limited, time was set aside for the SfL teacher to liaise with class teachers and other professionals when developing the IEPs.

The Toe-by-Toe programme was well implemented to support the needs of several pupils.

Staff were involved in the cluster AifL initiative. They were developing the use of formative assessment and a variety of appropriate strategies were being implemented.

In almost all classes there were good examples of the use of differentiated materials and a range of teaching approaches. Resources, for science, and the computer suite and library, were used effectively to enrich lessons and topics.

Good curricular progression and continuity, which was clearly referenced to the 5-14 guidelines, was planned for in a wide range of policies and programmes.

Whole school topics, such as health and road safety, were well resourced and the content and approaches to the topics at each stage showed good progression from P1 to P7.

Where setting was in place in classes and across stages the sets were well managed and allowed pupils to interchange between the sets where appropriate.

Target setting was in place in most classes and although still at an early stage the pupils responded well to being involved in taking more responsibility for their own learning.

There was effective communication of information about pupils' achievements between senior managers and class teachers.

Programmes of study were clear and well planned and showed good progression and continuity. There was good collaboration between staff to ensure effective transfer between classes at the end of the academic year.

Regular meetings took place between the HT and class teachers to review the content of forward plans and monitor pupils' progress and attainment in order to establish consistency across the school.

Learning assistants and the support for learning teacher made positive and significant contributions to the development of pupils with particular needs.

There were many good examples of visits outside school to add value to the topics covered in school, including visits to castles, places of worship and museums.

Areas for development in continuity and progression in learning including transitions

The HT should review arrangements on how to best share information on learning and teaching, assessment and the needs of and support for particular pupils.

The school should review learning and teaching policies and methodologies.

SUMMARY

Commendable features

- ✿ The very good school ethos.
- ✿ The excellent team spirit displayed by staff, pupils and parents.
- ✿ The role of the school in the community.
- ✿ The very successful system for celebrating pupil achievement.
- ✿ The purposeful learning environment and the quality of teaching.
- ✿ The good collaboration between staff to ensure continuity and progression in composite classes, job share classes and sets.
- ✿ The very good transition programmes.

Areas for development by the school

- ✿ The school should review learning and teaching and associated policies and strategies to take full account of the needs of all pupils in order to further raise achievement.
- ✿ The school should proceed with plans to formalise self-evaluation procedures in line with national guidance.
- ✿ The school should continue to develop their very good practices to ensure continuous progression in learning within the school and from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the school's S&Q report is a good reflection of the current development position.

The school will be supported to prepare an action plan to meet the main recommendations in this report.

Examples of good practice identified in the commendable features will be recorded to enable their wider dissemination across the authority.

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