

**Milngavie Primary School
East Dunbartonshire Council
14 June 2005**

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1. Background

Milngavie Primary School was inspected in March 2005 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics. The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations relating to improving aspects of school meals provision.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents.

The school serves Milngavie. At the time of the inspection the roll was 449 including 71 in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was generally well above the national average.

The nursery class was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The emphasis given to developing pupils' confidence, citizenship and enterprise skills.
- The commitment of senior managers, teachers and support staff to pupils' care and welfare.
- Pupils' courtesy and very good behaviour.
- Staff's progress in developing effective teamwork.
- Very sound and productive partnerships with parents.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents expressed very positive views about the work of the school, in interview and through their responses to questionnaires. All believed that their children enjoyed being at school and that it had a good reputation in the community. Some did not believe they had been given a clear view of the school's priorities for improving pupils' education. All pupils enjoyed being at the school. Almost all believed the school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy. They felt secure and well looked after in the school and were confident about what to do if they were bullied. Teachers were generally positive about the school and its achievements. They believed it had a very good reputation in the community and was well led. They noted significant improvements in morale. Support staff were very positive about most aspects of the school and all enjoyed working in it. However, a significant proportion believed that aspects of communication were weak and that they needed better training opportunities.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The broad and balanced curriculum included French at P5, P6 and P7. Teachers prepared their lessons well and direct teaching was used effectively in most classes. Some teachers made too much use of worksheets and repetitive tasks which did not promote a good pace of learning or meet the needs of higher attaining pupils. Staff made good use of praise. Teachers used homework to support pupils' learning in English language and mathematics, and occasionally in other areas of the curriculum such as science. Staff did not make enough use of the school's very good facilities for information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning and teaching. The school had begun to make more effective use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and plan next steps in their learning. Support staff, including classroom assistants and special educational needs auxiliaries, made many important contributions to support pupils' learning. The headteacher needed to brief and deploy them more effectively, to ensure best use of their skills and time to support learning and teaching.

Pupils applied themselves willingly to their tasks. They worked conscientiously and showed determination in completing work to a good standard. Most presented their work well and showed pride in their efforts. Pupils responded very well to opportunities to work on problem-solving and investigative tasks, such as in brief sessions of interactive mathematics, but they had too few such opportunities. The majority of pupils needed more challenging work which better matched their needs and abilities.

Many pupils had performed well in initiatives relating to key aspects of health, citizenship and enterprise. They learned about the roles of responsible citizens from the school's links with the local community and from the work of the pupil council. Some undertook duties such as acting as playground buddies. Many pupils developed skills and performed well in extra-curricular activities, including a range of sports and games. They participated in a number of competitions and a group of pupils in P7 had won a national Young Engineers award. Pupils' experiences in religious and moral education (RME) and personal and social development (PSD) were effective in helping them develop appropriate values and attitudes, including a sense of equality and

fairness. The school contributed to several charities and supported a number of African children, raising funds for their education and showing an ongoing interest in their welfare.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English Language was good but had fluctuated in recent years. Most pupils were gaining appropriate national levels in reading, writing, listening and talking. Some were capable of achieving higher standards. Pupils in P3 read fluently and with understanding but the pace of learning in reading at P1-P3 was sometimes too slow. At all stages, most pupils enjoyed reading for pleasure, and could describe and discuss details of their books such as the author and illustrator. Pupils in P7 read fluently and with expression. They were enthusiastic readers and could discuss which types of book they preferred. Pupils at all stages listened attentively. Most were very articulate in their spoken contributions, for example when exchanging ideas in groups. They responded confidently to teachers' questions. Pupils at P1-P3 did not have enough opportunities to develop their skills in writing independently. At all stages, pupils' skills in punctuation, sentence structure and presentation were good. Pupils needed more opportunities to use ICT in English language activities.

Mathematics

Pupils' attainment in mathematics was good and had been maintained at a high level over recent years. Almost all pupils in P2 and all in P3 and P4 had achieved national levels of attainment early. By P7, almost all pupils had achieved appropriate national levels. At all stages, pupils generally attained good standards in classwork but a few, particularly at P4 to P7, were capable of higher attainment. At all stages, pupils were confident in mental calculations and basic number concepts. They could identify a range of shapes, handle mathematical information and interpret graphs. Pupils in P7 showed a good understanding of scale. Pupils had too little experience of using spreadsheets and databases or creating graphs using computers. Pupils were developing useful skills in problem-solving and enquiry and could describe a range of strategies by P7.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Staff were committed to pupils' welfare and were sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs. Pupils felt safe in the school. A range of effective policies ensured their care and welfare, covering key areas such as child protection, race equality and safe access to the internet. The school had very effective approaches to address any instances of bullying. Pupils were encouraged to eat and drink healthily. Younger pupils received free fruit, attractively presented to encourage a positive response. The school needed to review the lunch arrangements, to ensure fairness and to avoid pupils having to queue outside in poor weather.

The school was not always successful in ensuring that pupils' learning needs were met. In order to ensure that pupils worked at an appropriate pace and level in English language and mathematics, teachers formed groups of pupils based on their prior

attainment. Staff provided effective support for pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning. However, the school needed to ensure that tasks were better matched to pupils' prior attainments and provided sufficient challenge for all pupils. The visiting network support teacher contributed well in her short time in school each week. She assisted staff in planning and worked with groups and individuals. Members of the network support team provided training which had helped staff to focus on specific learning needs. A few pupils received good support for English as an additional language. Special educational needs auxiliaries were committed to supporting their designated pupils but some lacked confidence and skills for some of their duties. Arrangements for pupils with Records of Needs were appropriate and included careful planning, in partnership with parents, for transition to secondary education.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The accommodation was good. The attractive buildings were old but very well maintained. Some areas of the playground were subject to persistent and serious flooding. Staff made very effective use of the available space and facilities. Parents had enhanced the school grounds by providing games, furniture, plants and flowers around play areas. The Millennium garden, adjacent to the nursery, provided an attractive feature and useful resource. Valuable facilities included a library, a computer suite, an outdoor sports pitch and two small gymnasias, one of which had been imaginatively converted from two former classrooms. The education authority had invested well in maintaining the school and had improved access for disabled users. The dining hall needed to be redecorated. Some pupils' toilets had been improved and others were due for refurbishment in the near future.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The school environment encouraged positive attitudes to learning. Pupils and staff showed mutual respect and related well to each other. Staff treated pupils sensitively and fairly. Teachers generally had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort and pupils responded well to these expectations. Staff's expectations of pupils' progress and attainment were often too low. The school had conducted a helpful audit of race equality issues using materials supplied by the education authority and had identified aspects for improvement. Regular opportunities for religious observance included stimulating contributions from the school chaplain, which pupils enjoyed.

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had good relationships with parents, local schools and colleges, the wider community including businesses and the church. The School Board was supportive and took a keen interest in the school. The PTA raised significant funds to enhance resources and facilities. Parents helped with some activities but some wished to be better informed about the school's priorities for improvement. The school communicated effectively with parents in a variety of ways including useful home-school diaries for P1-P3, informative newsletters, reports on pupils' progress, and well organised parents' evenings. Parents were consulted over sensitive topics, for example, in health education. Attendance at parents' evenings was high. Pupils participated in a range of community activities, including singing at the town's Christmas lights ceremony.

7. Improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Pupils were confident and hard working and most were making good progress. The school provided a sound curriculum and a range of experiences which contributed well to the key areas identified in the National Priorities for Education. In the most effective lessons, pupils responded enthusiastically to challenging approaches to learning and teaching, such as investigations and problem solving. Such lessons provided the basis for sharing good practice, improving learning and teaching, increasing the pace of learning and meeting pupils' needs more fully.

The headteacher had been in post for two and a half years. She was highly committed to the school and had achieved significant improvements in the climate for learning. She was respected by parents, pupils and staff. Senior managers had begun to introduce improvements to the curriculum and to the quality of learning and teaching, and had improved teamwork among staff. The headteacher needed now to ensure a sharper focus on further improvements in learning and teaching and pupils' attainment. The senior team of two deputy headteachers and one acting principal teacher contributed a range of complementary skills to leadership in the school and were strong role models. The deputy headteachers' remits needed to focus more on aspects of quality assurance and to reinforce their contribution to leadership in the school.

The school had improved as a result of its effective approaches to monitoring its performance. However, the headteacher had not yet involved the deputy headteachers, teachers and support staff enough in contributing to this process. Staff had reviewed the quality of their work using national quality indicators but now needed to use them more selectively and effectively. The headteacher monitored a range of evidence such as information about pupils' attainment. She visited classes frequently, and carried out

formal observations of pupils' learning experience. She provided teachers with detailed feedback and used the information from her visits well to identify priorities for improvement. She needed to reinstate the practice of systematic sampling of pupils' work. Teachers were appropriately involved in consultation on the school's development priorities and more generally about key decisions in the school.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve learning, teaching and meeting pupils' needs. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- raise staff expectations of pupils' attainment and increase the pace and challenge of lessons to meet pupils' needs better;
- make greater and more effective use of information and communications technology to support learning and teaching across the curriculum;
- improve deployment and continuous professional development for support staff, to target their contributions more effectively on pupils' needs; and
- focus leadership responsibilities more sharply on improving learning, teaching and attainment.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Bill Geddes
HM Inspector

14 June 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Pastoral care
- Accommodation and facilities
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be fair

- Meeting pupils' needs

We judged the following to be unsatisfactory

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<p>All believed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children enjoyed being at school and that it had a good reputation in the community. <p>Almost all believed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils found their work stimulating and challenging, that the school set high standards for pupils' attainment; • parents' evenings were helpful and informative; and • staff showed care and concern for pupils' welfare and that there was mutual respect between pupils and staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About a third thought that they did not have a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving pupils' education.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<p>All pupils enjoyed being at the school. Almost all felt safe and well looked after in the school and believed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy; and • teachers expected them to work as hard as they could and told them when they had done something well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils did not raise any specific issues.

What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<p>Teachers generally expressed very positive views about almost every aspect of the work of the school. Almost all felt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they were fully involved in decisions affecting their work; • their time for continuous professional development was well used; • the school set high standards for pupils' attainment; and • pupils were enthusiastic about learning. <p>All ancillary staff enjoyed working in the school and were very positive about aspects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how hard the school worked to maintain good relations with the local community; and • the care and concern which staff showed for pupils' welfare. 	<p>Teachers did not raise any specific issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a quarter of ancillary staff believed they had good opportunities to be involved in decision making. • Less than half believed there was regular staff discussion about how to achieve school priorities, or that there was effective communication between senior managers and staff. • Only a third thought that their training time was well used.

How can you contact us?

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Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Strategic Director - Community, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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