



Follow-through Inspection Report

St Mary's Primary School

December 2007

The Inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education HMIE published a report on standards and quality in St Mary's Primary School in March 2006 following their inspection of the school in December 2005. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original report.

After consultation with HMIE, it was agreed that this follow-through report would be the responsibility of the education authority. Members of the Education Improvement Service visited the school in September to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

Continuous Improvement

The school had continued to provide and extend the learning experiences of the children. After school clubs had been extended and the opportunities afforded to pupils in regard to health promotion had increased. A variety of clubs, such as skiing, football and fitness to enhance the children's physical skills and level of activity, were now well established. Children welcomed and fully participated in these opportunities. Their levels of activity had increased as had their confidence in their physical ability. Last session the school had been more successful than in previous years in their overall performance at the city-wide athletics competition held at Scotstoun Stadium.

Pupils' achievements were widely celebrated and their participation in a variety of experiences was building their confidence and increasing their motivation. The school had once again been awarded a diamond award for their enterprise activities.

Partnership working with other agencies had been strengthened. Such collaboration was extending the opportunities for learning of all the pupils. The school's recent involvement with Wild over Waterways had provided children with the opportunity to work with artists in drama and art workshops. Children were more confident in performance drama with primary seven pupils electing to write and perform for parents a play based on their World War II topic. This had been well received by the local community. Other classes regularly provided opportunities for parents to see their children's work in a variety of curricular areas.

Attainment had continued to increase steadily in reading and writing. Attainment in reading had increased by 4% over two years and writing by 5%. Mathematical attainment had remained almost the same over the last two years. The good quality of attainment across the school was being maintained.

Progress Towards the Main Points for Action

The initial inspection report identified two main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

Main point for action 1

The school should improve the balance of the curriculum to ensure appropriate progression in the development of pupils' skills

The school had made very good progress in meeting this point for action.

Curriculum guidance in many areas had been updated. Curricular advice now included well directed programmes of study for drama and art and design. Clear outcomes had been identified and implementation plans for teachers at each stage had been drawn up. These plans identified the skills development at each stage and ensured a more cohesive approach to the children's experiences. Teachers and pupils were clearer about the connections across their learning. These improvements now provided a more balanced curriculum for the pupils at each stage and allowed for a clear development and progression of skills. It was worthy of note that pupils had been more successful in competitions to design posters and in poetry writing, with some children gaining local and national recognition for their entries.

A new Personal, Social and Health Education programme had been drawn up incorporating aspects of citizenship. This programme was now fully implemented across the school. This revised programme allowed for a more skills based approach and ensured that the children were engaged in meaningful experiences to enable them to deploy the skills they had been taught in relevant contexts. The school continued to showcase the work of each class at 'sharing' assemblies to strengthen whole school identity and expectations. There was a strong focus on pupil involvement in decision making with older pupils supporting the younger pupils in ensuring they were fully represented in school matters such as enhancing the provision and organisation of playground games. Senior pupils had organised and carried out a presentation to mark the retiral of the dining supervisor in the school.

Weekly timetables had been reviewed across the school and the use of curriculum flexibility time had been allocated to increase the provision of physical education which was further enhancing the health promotion activities within the school.

Additional time for language and mathematics had also been allocated and new resources purchased. These resources and the time allocation had been directed to more independent learning opportunities for the children. Pupils were now more engaged in co-operative learning approaches and collaborative learning. 'Big Board' number resources had been purchased and staff training in their use had been given. A workshop for parents had also been provided to help them become familiar with how this approach was helping their children to better understand number systems and be more competent in mental mathematics operations.

Teachers consistently used interactive whiteboards to great effect in the teaching of problem solving. The interactive resource Problem Solving in Action had been successfully implemented across the school. This had been supplemented with challenge cards that teachers had made themselves. At all stages there was a more consistent approach to how problem solving was taught and recorded. Pupils were directed to think about the strategies they were using and describe how they had tackled the problem. More regular plenary sessions where children shared with each other what they had done to solve the problem were ensuring that children were more able to discuss the approach they had used and suggest alternatives. They were confident in using peer and self assessment strategies to review their learning.

As the school had provided more opportunities for problem solving, children were now more confident in this approach. Upper school pupils had helped to organise their own mathematics challenge competition within the school. This involved teams of pupils from primary five to seven tackling a series of mathematics problems. The school had worked in partnership with the local secondary to run this event for primary pupils in the upper stages. Most children were now able to discuss strategies and describe approaches used to solve the problems they had encountered. Children now had a clearer and broader understanding of problem solving as part of daily life.

Main point for action 2

The school should continue to raise attainment by improving approaches to meeting pupils' needs and tracking their progress systematically

The school had made very good progress in meeting this point for action.

Teachers and children in the school have benefited from the regular input of a teacher deployed by the John Paul New Community to deliver 'coaching in context' in talking and listening. A focus on questioning techniques and the development of higher order skills in these areas was enabling pupils to more constructively engage in their own learning. The confidence and ability of the children had increased. They were more attentive in the classes and more focused and animated in their responses to questioning by the teacher.

Approaches to teachers' planning of lessons had been reviewed and they were now required to detail the different approaches they would employ in their classes to ensure that all children were actively engaged in their learning and suitably challenged in their work. The headteacher carefully monitored such plans and discussed in full with every teacher each term their expectations of pupils. This had resulted in an increase in the learning targets set for pupils particularly the more able. This enhanced attention to tracking the progress of pupils had resulted in an increased pace of learning that was now beginning to be more evident across the school. There was an increase in the number of children achieving national assessment levels earlier than expected.

Teachers had benefited from further staff development in the use of formative assessment. Children were now more regularly challenged in the classroom and were being encouraged and supported to recognise what they needed to do to improve their learning. Resources and opportunities for children to work more collaboratively and independently had been provided by the school. It was now more common to see groups of children and individuals working more independently in the open areas of the school.

Plans to engage pupils more in setting their own learning targets were being implemented across the school. Learning logs were used by the children to set their own personal targets for health, writing and attitude to learning. Pupils benefited from the positive and flexible approaches of staff to helping them set personal targets. Most children were confident in using a variety of ways to review their strengths and their learning needs. They could identify their personal goals, make connections with their classroom experience and identify what needed to be done to work towards achieving their goals. Pupils were now beginning to track their own progress against the targets they had set themselves.

The principal teacher had continued to develop the school's approach to meeting the needs of all learners. Referral arrangements for additional support for learning were now directed to both identifying children requiring greater challenge in their learning in addition to those needing more support. This was a good first step and teachers had responded well to this requirement to reflect upon and meet the needs of all learners.

In addition nurturing approaches were being developed at the early stages in the school to support a small number of young children requiring such support.

Individual learning plans for children requiring additional support had recently been introduced. They more clearly identified the needs of the children and the strategies and supports to be put in place to help meet these needs. Regular review and evaluation of these plans was being established to support this revised process and ensure that teaching resources were being maximised to more systematically meet the needs of all learners. Parents and children were becoming involved in this process where appropriate.

The involvement of teachers in these arrangements was being developed to ensure that the nature of the identified learner's needs and the support requested had been clearly evaluated. Teachers were growing in confidence in these reflective practices. This more thorough evaluation of individual pupil progress in learning was beginning to positively influence the deployment of school resources and increase the ability of teachers and support staff to meet the needs of each child.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The school had made very good progress towards meeting the recommendations contained in the HMIe report.

The school has maintained its good record of attainment and continued to steadily build upon this. The strong ethos of expectation was being further strengthened by the renewed focus on independent learning of the pupils. All children enjoyed a wide breadth of opportunity. Their confidence and ability was being developed by their involvement and participation in external activities and competitions. The more robust skills based approaches to learning in expressive arts was building competence and being rewarded by recognition of achievement by pupils from the school in a variety of external competitions.

Staff took advantage of the training opportunities they had been given and were continuing to develop their classroom approaches and teaching methodology to strive to meet the learning needs of all their pupils. The headteacher continued to engage with staff to reflect on what the school needed to do to improve and how this could best be achieved. Partnership with parents and the community remained strong. There were regular opportunities for parents to see the wide variety of learning experiences that their children undertook in school.

The headteacher and staff of the school worked conscientiously to provide a full and rounded educational experience for all pupils and promote all features of an inclusive school. The strong emphasis and lead that the headteacher provided in health and well being was benefiting all pupils. The further improvements to self evaluation that were planned by the school and the educational authority would further increase the capacity of the school to improve and continue to provide a good quality of education within the community.

Margaret Doran

Margaret Doran
Executive Director: Education and Social Work Services
Glasgow City Council