



Follow-through Inspection Report

Ruchill Autism Unit

SEPTEMBER 2010

1. The Inspection

Ruchill Autism Unit was inspected in May 2008 as part of a national sample of provision for children with additional support needs. HMIE's initial report was published on 2 September 2008.

Working with the education authority, the unit co-ordinator and her staff prepared an action plan to address the main points for action identified in the report and continued to improve the quality of education for young people attending the unit.

During session 2008-2009 Glasgow City Council considered a proposal to merge Ruchill Primary, including the autism unit, and another neighbouring primary school. The Council's decision, however, was to delay the merger of the schools until their purpose built accommodation had been completed. During the period when the proposed merger was being considered, the autism unit provided significant support to parents and children and, to some extent, this focus affected the pace of development.

2. Continuous Improvement

Staff in the unit, including support staff, have been encouraged to continue to develop their leadership for learning and have contributed effectively towards taking forward planned improvements.

The unit has continued to develop and extend the opportunities it provides for children to learn beyond the classroom. These include sporting opportunities such as judo, cricket and multisports, residential trips and a carefully planned outing for the whole school community to Alton Towers. The unit has continued to work very effectively with its collocated primary school and has ensured appropriate levels of integration for all children. Children who are playing and learning with their peers continue to be very well supported. In addition, the unit co-ordinator has worked with senior managers of the schools with which the unit will merge in order to develop joint approaches and shared vision, values and aims.

Unit staff have worked hard, and in partnership with parents, psychologists, speech and language therapists and other professionals, to assess and plan for children's individual needs. They have also continued to extend their own knowledge and understanding of autism. As a result, they meet the wide range of needs of their children effectively..

Main points for action:

1. Continue to improve the curriculum.
2. Share the very good practice in the unit to improve the consistency and quality of teaching.
3. Make self-evaluation more systematic to help the unit improve continuously.

1. Continue to improve the curriculum

Within the constraints imposed by planning for a possible merger, the unit has made satisfactory progress towards meeting this main point for action. Working together,

staff have developed improved approaches to planning in the core area of health and well-being. They have developed and improved learners' experiences in drama, science and ICT. Children are positive about their increased opportunities for choice. The curriculum has been significantly enriched through the introduction of the Forest Schools programme. As a result, children have developed their teamwork, their physical abilities and their resilience and have demonstrated that they can apply their skills in new and challenging contexts.

Together staff have tracked children's progress in writing and have identified this as a priority for improvement. As a result, they have recently introduced Big Writing, working with mainstream colleagues to develop their own skills and understanding in this area. They have carried out baseline assessment of all children's skills in writing and are now well placed to ensure appropriate progress for all learners.

Staff are now planning to continue to develop their curricular provision by more effectively planning for and tracking children's progress towards planned outcomes and taking forward their active engagement in their learning.

2. Share the very good practice in the unit to improve the consistency and quality of teaching.

The unit has made satisfactory progress towards meeting this main point for action. Staff have continued to work with mainstream, colocated colleagues and across the city to develop understanding of autistic spectrum disorders and of strategies to support learners. Staff value the opportunity to meet daily and to reflect together on children's learning and progress. The planned development in session 2010-2011 of improved approaches to the observation of and reflection on learning and teaching, both by the unit co-ordinator and by peers, will help to ensure that good practice is shared within the unit and to further improve the consistency and quality of teaching.

3. Make self-evaluation more systematic to help the unit improve continuously.

The unit has made satisfactory progress with this main point for action. The unit co-ordinator and her staff continue to reflect on their work and on children's learning and development. All staff have a commitment to planning for improvement and support staff have become increasingly involved in self-evaluation and in identifying improvement priorities. Working together, staff have effectively used *How Good Is Our School?* 3 and the associated education authority support materials to evaluate aspects of their provision.

Staff have worked effectively with the education authority to improve the quality of their planning to meet individual needs. In addition, they are increasingly involving parents in evaluating how effectively additional support plans are working. Parents are consulted and their views recorded at children's annual review meetings.

The unit has not yet, however, developed a sufficiently clear, agreed and systematic approach to self-evaluation and quality assurance, particularly in the important area of observing and reflecting on learning and teaching. Together, staff have decided that a key priority for the improvement plan for session 2010-2011 is to develop a more robust approach to evaluating learning and teaching and to ensure that feedback to staff following classroom observations effectively supports further improvement. In addition, the unit co-ordinator and the education authority will work together to ensure that progress with the improvement plan is rigorously monitored.

3. Conclusion

The unit has continued to build on its strengths and has addressed the main points for action identified in the initial report, bringing about some improvement for its learners. There has been a focus on curricular development which has led to an improvement in planning in some areas and provided more opportunities for personalisation and choice. The unit has further extended the opportunities for children, in particular, through sport and physical activity. The unit improvement plan for session 2010-2011 accurately identifies the priorities for further improvement. Working with her staff, the unit co-ordinator is well-placed to bring these about.

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