



# Follow-through Inspection Report

## St Francis of Assisi Primary School

June 2008

### **The Inspection**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education published a report on standards and quality in St Francis of Assisi Primary School in October 2007 following their inspection of the school in June 2007.

Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how the main points for action, identified in the report, would be achieved.

### **Continuous Improvement**

Following an unsettled period between the retirement of the previous head teacher and the appointment of the new head teacher, the school had made very good progress in overtaking and enhancing the main points for action in the report. The new head teacher and staff moved quickly to take forward the main points for action from the HMIE inspection report on the school. The action plan identified ambitious tasks and timescales as well as the criteria for monitoring and evaluating progress. Teaching staff had received a broad range of training and advice from the authority's Education Improvement Service and the head teacher to support the implementation of the action plan.

Importantly, the high standards of attainment had continued to rise and a significant number of children were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment earlier than might normally be expected, especially at P2 and P7 in reading. There are indications that the introduction of more robust and effective pupil tracking systems will enable a better quality of attainment passes. Class teachers were also more confident and effective in the tracking of progress of individual children. Teachers' involvement in an extensive range of development work, especially in active and collaborative learning had significantly improved the quality of learning and teaching in classrooms. There was substantial evidence of a more challenging and ambitious pace of learning at all stages in the school and children were enjoying the learning experiences on offer to them.

At all stages of the school children's achievements were commendable. They were clearly focused on the principles of Curriculum for Excellence and demonstrated their confidence, sense of responsibility and successful learning through participation in a wide range of activities.

With the financial support of the Parent Council and through additional Scottish Government funding, there had been a major investment in ICT. A fully equipped ICT suite was purposefully and imaginatively used by children and staff. Children were using wireless laptops to enhance personal research. Interactive whiteboards had been installed in 8 classrooms throughout the school and the introduction of appropriate interactive software programmes and staff training had impacted positively on the quality of the learning experiences of the children across the curriculum. For example, Primary 6 and 7 children had used the local authority "Challenge Glasgow" interactive materials on "Scotland," "Romans" and "Tropical Rainforests," to enrich collaborative work in their environmental education programme.

The Eco Committee, supported by all children and staff in the school, had co-ordinated

a range of environmental activities including substantial practical and visual improvements to enable the playground environment to be used as an outdoor classroom, resulted in the award of a Green Flag in 2008. Children's knowledge and awareness of environmental issues were commended by the assessors.

The school was awarded the Diamond Award for Enterprise in 2007 following the very successful development of links with the local community and local businesses, notably through local citizenship initiatives in health and drug and alcohol awareness, the award of the Certificate of Merit in Financial Education from the local authority and social occasions involving the community, notably the Daffodil Tea, the school Art Exhibition and the Christmas performance. Children in P7 were involved in a Curriculum for Excellence Life Skills project, involving a number of cultural, sporting and outward bound activities.

The school had been extremely effective in extending opportunities for children at lunch time and after school, notably in athletics, netball, football and junior commonwealth games. Music continued to be a focus where the school excels. This had been enhanced through partnership working with St Andrew's Secondary School and children now have opportunities to learn a range of instruments during the school day.

School attendance was very good and well above average for the city. Links with parents and the community had been significantly enhanced through an open doors approach and there were many positive examples of partnership working.

## **Progress Towards the Main Points for Action**

### **Main point for action 1**

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 children and other stakeholders.

#### **Ensure that teachers use assessment information more effectively to meet pupils' needs.**

*The school, with the support of the authority had made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.*

Senior managers and staff had worked closely together to review school policy and improve the procedures for tracking pupil progress. With the support of the education authority, staff training on a range of assessment strategies had ensured that assessment was now firmly embedded in all classrooms throughout the school. Teachers had benefited from training and support and advice from the education authority. They were now more aware of the criteria for marking and children's writing had improved.

Training in teaching for effective learning, led by authority coaches in context had encouraged teachers to observe others more readily. This had helped to inspire others to try new initiatives and engender confidence amongst staff. Formative assessment strategies were now embedded in all classrooms. Teacher and children's comments in workbooks and jotters were of a very high quality and demonstrated a clear understanding. Teachers' forward plans were reviewed and amended to focus more closely on the development of key skills across the curriculum and to reflect the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers used this assessment information effectively to identify and plan the next steps in children's learning.

Senior managers met each term with class teachers to review the progress made by children and agree targets for individuals and groups. This engagement and more productive dialogue with staff had impacted positively on the pace and challenge of work in the school, raising attainment and defining the professional relationships between the head teacher and staff. Through this process she was able to allocate additional support from pupil support assistants and other sources to meet pupils' needs. Good progress had been made in involving staff in the writing of Additional Support Plans. This had been successful in raising staff awareness of children's needs and the importance of differentiated learning.

The introduction of personal learning plans throughout the school had ensured that children were now discussing their targets in learning with their teachers and were better informed towards what they had to do next in order to improve their learning.

**Main point for action 2**

**Develop greater rigour in evaluating the work of the school, especially in learning and teaching.**

*The school, with the support of the authority has made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.*

The school had been successful in introducing more robust processes for self evaluation. Staff awareness and understanding of How Good is Our School had been raised following in service training and a whole school audit of practice. Senior managers and staff had worked closely together to review, improve and add rigour to school procedures for tracking children's progress. Using the authority tracking programme, senior managers and staff had met regularly to review the progress made by children and agree targets for individuals. The head teacher had evaluated this information to ensure there was a very good pace of learning across the whole school. These developments had impacted positively on children's performance with a significant number attaining levels earlier than would normally be expected.

Senior managers had comprehensively monitored and supported children's learning experiences. They had worked well with teachers to agree the high standard of teaching that was expected. They had carried forward a regular, expansive and focused programme of classroom monitoring, including the regular review of children's assessment folders in core subjects and the observation of learning and teaching, where verbal and written developmental feedback was consistently provided for staff development. As a result there was much greater consistency in learning and teaching across the school.

A range of new initiatives had been introduced and systematically evaluated across the school to bring learning to life, notably the ambitious introduction of an ICT suite and interactive whiteboards, new teaching programmes and resources for learning in mathematics, language, ICT and environmental studies. The introduction of active learning in early stages, a focus on collaborative learning in middle and upper stages and staff training on Teaching for Effective Learning had enabled staff and children opportunities to become more active and motivated learners through a more interactive approach to teaching and learning. This had ensured that a greater number of children were working on tasks that they found engaging, challenging and enjoyable.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

St Francis of Assisi Primary is a vibrant and welcoming school. It has made very good progress in overtaking and enhancing the main points for action in the report and had successfully built on its strengths and improved further by implementing a considerable number of new initiatives to improve learning and teaching. Staff and children's morale was high and there was a very positive atmosphere for learning. Parents were very supportive and the school continued to be very well regarded by the local community.

The head teacher and all staff had worked very effectively as a team. With the support provided by the education authority, there were examples of excellent practice emerging, particularly in active and collaborative learning and in innovative approaches to the teaching of Environmental Studies through ICT.

The excellent leadership of the head teacher, well supported by the depute head teacher and the very good efforts and commitment of staff, demonstrated a clear ability and commitment to improve the high quality of the work of the school and continue to provide a very good educational provision within the community.

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