
School Review
Dalmeny Primary School

The school in context

Dalmeny Primary School is a non-denominational primary school built in the 1960s, which serves the area of north-west Edinburgh. The catchment area comprises village, rural and army HQ housing.

Dalmeny Primary School has six classrooms. The school building includes a dining room presently used as staff base and resource room, gym hall, learning support room/medical base, one office shared by the head teacher (HT) and administrator, a small internal storeroom and several walk-in cupboards. The school grounds have a sports field, trim park (assault course) and a fenced nature reserve in small woodland.

The current school roll is 94. There are five classes and a nursery in the school, organised as follows:

Nursery	AM	PM			
	18	10			
P1	P2/3	P3/4	P4/5	P6/7	
15	21	19	18	21	

Nine district pupils enrolled in P1 in August 2002 and two district pupils enrolled elsewhere. There were also six non-district pupils enrolled in P1.

Attendance rates for 2001/2002 showed an absence rate of 12 half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 17 and 18 half days respectively. The 2001/2002 target for total absence for the school is 12.5 half days per pupil. There were no formal exclusions during the same period.

The teaching staff in 2002/2003 was:

Basic Complement	PD/LSS*
9.18 FTE**	0.19 FTE

Visiting Specialist(s)

0.12 FTE

Absence Cover

0.16 FTE

*Positive discrimination/learning support and special needs **Full time equivalent

The authority allocate sufficient funds for the HT to have no teaching commitment. The HT has a teaching commitment of 0.4 FTE in order to finance learning support. There are four visiting teachers for music, art, violin and brass.

The pupil : teacher ratio is 14:4. In addition, six support staff are allocated to a range of whole-school responsibilities.

The HT and most of the teaching and support staff have entered the staff development and review scheme.

The pupil unit cost for 2001/2002 was £2897, compared to authority and national averages of £2313 and £2228 respectively. There is a School Board and a 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:

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2002 target (upper)
Reading	77%	79%	78%	72%	72%
Writing	54%	58%	71%	72%	75%
Mathematics	54%	79%	84%	84%	84%

Eight pupils, two of whom have Records of Needs, have been referred to psychological services.

The school development plan

The current interim school development plan covers the period 2002/2003 and targets the following main priorities:

- 5-14 Environmental Studies (ES);
- 5-14 Expressive Arts;
- homework;

- information and communications technology (ICT);
- learning and teaching;
- teacher planning;
- links with external support agencies;
- personal and social development (PSD);
- accommodation and facilities;
- organisation of space and resources;
- remits and responsibilities; and
- school self-evaluation procedures.

The review programme based on the standards and quality (S&Q) report comprised two key areas:

- learning and teaching, with a focus on writing, reading and singing;
- management, leadership and quality assurance;

plus the authority theme:

- aspects of social inclusion.

Review procedures

Dalmeny Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Quality Services and Education Support Services Groups of the Education Department during October 2002. The review was based on the school's own S&Q report for session 2001-2002. This was considered by the team to be of a good quality and to form an acceptable basis for review.

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 observations. The results of their findings are given below as a commentary on the school's own report.

In order to make their evaluation, the team consulted a number of school documents, including the school development plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, five lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a sample of parents.

Ninety four questionnaires were sent to school parents and 43 were returned. Twenty eight questionnaires were sent to nursery parents and 12 were returned.

Parents' views

Almost all school parents said that:

- their child enjoyed being at school;
- their child found activities stimulating and challenging;
- their child was encouraged to work to the best of their ability;
- their child would be helped if they were having difficulty;
- their child was treated fairly by their teacher;
- they were content with the part they were asked to play in their child's education;
- pupils were generally well behaved; and
- the school had a good reputation in the community.

Most school parents said that:

- they were satisfied with the homework their child received;
- the teacher really knew their child as an individual;
- they got regular, accurate and helpful information about their child's progress in school work;
- teachers were good at letting them know about their child's strengths and weaknesses;
- the school had explained to them what part they could play in their child's education;
- the school was good at explaining its work to them;
- they were confident that if they raised a matter of concern the school would do something about it;
- they came away from parent-teacher meetings having learned something useful;
- teachers dealt effectively with bad behaviour;
- the school was well led; and
- the school had good materials and equipment for learning and teaching.

Some parents felt that:

- the school did not have good accommodation.

All nursery parents said that:

- their child enjoyed being at school;
- the school was well led; and
- the school had a good reputation in the community.

Almost all nursery parents said that:

- their child found activities stimulating and challenging;
- their child was encouraged to work to the best of their ability;
- their child would be helped if they were having difficulty;
- their child was treated fairly by the staff;
- they were confident that if they raised a matter of concern the school would do something about it;
- children were generally well behaved; and
- the school had good materials and equipment for learning and teaching.

Most nursery parents said that:

- the teacher really knew their child as an individual;
- the school had explained to them what part they could play in their child's education;
- the school was good at explaining its work to them; and
- they were content with the part they were asked to play in their child's education.

Some parents said that:

- the school did not have good accommodation.

Findings of the review

1 Management, leadership and quality assurance

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

- *The management structure of the school operates through collegial teamwork with an emphasis on joint staff decision making.*

- *Staff participate actively in the development of policies and guidelines in almost all cases.*
- *The school takes full account of the views of parents and pupils. Communication is a particular strength of the school in this respect.*
- *Staff are regularly and actively involved in the implementation of development plan priorities.*
- *The HT has an open and responsive leadership style with the whole school community and is able to take difficult decisions effectively, when necessary.*

Overall, management, leadership and quality assurance in the school is good.

Strengths in management, leadership and quality assurance

The school is commended for the strategies and efforts made to ensure a high level of communication with parents and members of the wider community.

Pupils and parents confirm that all school staff are approachable and responsive. Pupils are well supported by all adults in the school.

There are regular opportunities for teaching staff to meet and discuss matters involving the day to day running of the school.

Established members of staff have had some opportunity to participate in the development of policies and guidelines and to have input into the development plan priorities for the school.

The HT is held in high regard by staff, pupils, parents and members of the local community for his energy and commitment in taking the school forward in a number of important ways. He can, when necessary, make difficult decisions.

The whole staff work hard and well as a team to ensure that all pupils receive the very best educational and pastoral provision. Commendably, this has been maintained throughout a period of significant staffing change.

Support staff also work flexibly and co-operatively as part of the team to ensure the smooth running of the school and the effective support of pupils in both their learning and pastoral care.

The HT, in particular, has an in-depth knowledge of almost all pupils, their areas of interest, strengths and needs.

Areas for development in management, leadership and quality assurance

In the light of the recent and considerable staffing changes, the school should revisit and clearly and collaboratively define whole staff procedures and practices for consultation and communication amongst members of staff as a matter of priority. This will actively contribute to a clear and shared understanding of appropriate roles, remits and responsibilities and of the decision-making processes of the school.

The school should proceed with its intention to implement a clear and systematic monitoring policy to include the sharing of classroom practice and sampling of pupils' work.

2 Learning and teaching

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

- *There are comprehensive medium term planners for all aspects of writing at all stages.*
- *Assessment in writing is very well advanced in most classes.*
- *Mathematics plans, including mental maths, are thorough and comprehensive for levels A to E.*
- *Assessment in mathematics is equally thorough.*

- *The school has a well-developed programme for singing.*
- *All children in the school experience very good singing instruction on a regular basis.*

Overall, the learning and teaching in the school is good with some very good aspects.

Strengths in learning and teaching

Overall, learning and teaching is good, with some very good aspects.

Planning is good with clear account taken of the long, medium and short term.

Well-structured forwards plans are in place for mathematics and writing, clearly reflecting the 5-14 learning outcomes and effectively ensuring continuity and progression.

Learning environments are stimulating and motivating throughout the school, promoting an ethos of achievement and reflecting high expectations of pupil effort. The choice of tasks, activities and resources are appropriate and effectively meet pupils' needs.

The nursery provides a very stimulating learning environment in which children have the confidence to explore and develop. Activities are well structured for developing children's communication and language skills. Opportunities for literacy development within the nursery are very good, providing child centred activities which capture the children's motivation and interest.

There is a very effective whole school system for recording and transferring appropriate assessment information.

Assessment in writing is comprehensive and detailed.

Mathematics plans are comprehensive for levels A to E in terms of progression within each level.

Assessment in mathematics is thorough, with a clear focus for each unit.

Standardised testing in reading and mathematics is regularly and consistently used from P1 to P7. National tests are used appropriately to confirm pupil attainment levels. All formalised testing is monitored regularly by the HT using a comprehensive and thorough tracking system.

The school is commended for its target setting procedures, which provide regular opportunities for staff, parents and pupils to celebrate achievement, and share future anticipated levels of achievement. Parents are very satisfied with the information received from the school about their children's targets.

There are opportunities for parents to be comprehensively informed about the work undertaken by classes in each year group through open meetings at the school. There is a homework policy in place which provides clear guidance for parents in supporting pupils with homework.

All classes receive high quality singing tuition on a regular basis. Pupils are enthusiastic, motivated and fully engaged in lessons. Commendably, the school choir has recently won a prize in a regional competition.

Areas for development in learning and teaching

The school should now extend the forward planning process to include full evaluations so that they may be used fully to inform next steps in learning and to form the basis for accurate reporting of progress to parents.

The school should continue with its intention to develop the planning sheets for the mathematics programme at level F.

The school should proceed with its intention to complete the singing programme as part of the planned development of the expressive arts programme.

The school should further develop the process for the moderation of national tests in writing to ensure that appropriate attainment levels are consistently allocated and pupils are tested on the next level as soon as they are ready to do so.

3 Social inclusion

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

- *The school has a very good, and consistently implemented, learning support policy.*
- *The school has well developed and successful strategies for the early identification, effective support and systematic tracking of progress of pupils with learning needs.*
- *Behaviour in the school is consistently very good; the school has a well-developed approach to the management of pupil behaviour.*
- *Individualised Educational Programmes (IEPs) are very good, fully addressing the needs of pupils in respect of Maths, Language and Personal and Social Development (PSD) targets.*
- *There is a very good learning support network throughout the school ably led by the learning support teacher (LST).*
- *The school has very good support from outside agencies.*

Overall, social inclusion in the school is very good.

Strengths in social inclusion

The school learning support policy is good.

The school has very good and consistently implemented learning support practices which successfully support children with identified learning needs.

Very effective strategies are in place for the early identification of pupils with additional needs. The quality of support provided for those pupils is very good.

Behaviour throughout the school is consistently very good and there is a high level of expectation from staff, parents, members of the community and pupils themselves.

All pupils identify strongly with and are proud of their school. They feel safe, secure and well supported in their learning. They enjoy a good range of formal and informal extra curricular activities.

Procedures for the formation and implementation of IEPs are very good. Comprehensive programmes of work are routinely devised by the LST who liaises effectively with relevant staff to ensure consistency of approach in their implementation.

IEPs are regularly reviewed to ensure progress is well monitored and effective communication is in place between members of staff, parents and outside agencies.

Parents are given full opportunity to be involved in all stages of IEP development and review.

There is a well organised and well structured learning support network throughout the school ably led by the LST and supported by the learning support co-ordinator, and liaison between all relevant staff is highly effective.

The school is well supported by outside agencies.

Areas for development in social inclusion

The school should evaluate the learning support policy to ensure it takes full account of existing exemplary practice, the five roles of Learning Support and Special Needs (LSSN), the criteria for prioritising allocation, the involvement of parents and the audience for the policy.

The school should ensure that all short-term targets in IEPs are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed (SMART).

The school should proceed with its intention to review and revise the whole school policy for PSD and should include clear linkage between this programme and the positive behaviour approaches. Most specifically, the approaches for pupils with social, emotional, behavioural needs should be clearly addressed.

Summary

Commendable features

- The school has very good systems in place for effective communication with pupils, parents and the local community.
- The programmes for mathematics and writing effectively ensure continuity and progression in learning outcomes.
- Learning support practice, structures and systems are very good and children with additional learning needs are very well supported by the school.
- Learning and teaching in the school is good, with some very good aspects.

Areas for development by the school

- The school should review and revise all approaches to staff consultation and communication.
- The school should implement a comprehensive monitoring policy.
- The school should review forward planning practice and include effective evaluation to inform next steps in learning.
- The school should review and revise the Learning Support and Special Needs policy.

Areas for development by the authority

- The school should now be supported in the preparation of an action plan to address the main recommendations of this report.
- The school should be supported in taking forward the review of consultation and communication within the school.

- The school has a very good website which has recently won a prize in a national competition. This should be entered in the good practice data to enable its dissemination to other schools.

Very good:	Major Strengths
Good:	Strengths outweigh weaknesses
Fair:	Some important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	Major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	Less than 15%