

Report To: Education & Lifelong Learning Committee

Date: 03 November 2009

Report By: Acting Director of Education

Report No: EDUC/88/09/AH

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Subject: HMle report on St John's Primary School

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee of an HMle external evaluation of St John's Primary School.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 St John's Primary School have received a very good report from the HMle. The report was produced on 29 September 2009. Members should note that the indicators of quality reflect very well on the school with two indicators of quality evaluated as 'very good' and three as 'good'. Members should be pleased that within St John's Primary, Learners' Experiences and Improvement through Self-Evaluation have been graded as 'very good' by HMle.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Education & Lifelong Learning Committee approve the report on St John's Primary School.

Albert Henderson
Acting Director of Education

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 St John's Primary School was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) in June 2009. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages, identified key strengths and main points for action using the following six-point scale:

- 6 - Excellent – excellent
- 5 - Very Good – major strengths
- 4 - Good – important strengths with some areas for improvement
- 3 - Satisfactory – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- 2 - Weak – important weaknesses
- 1 - Unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

4.2 HMIe assessed and reported on the views of parents, pupils and staff, the quality of learning in teaching, how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, achievement in national examinations, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, the school's capacity for improvement.

4.3 The report was published on 29 September 2009. It has been issued to staff, parents, local elected members and the Convener and Vice-Convener for Education & Lifelong Learning.

4.4 St John's Primary School is inspected under the evaluation framework "How Good Is Our School 3?"

4.5 In assessing the indicators of quality, HMIe found two aspects of the work of the school to be 'very good' and three to be 'good'. The evaluations of the indicators for quality can be found on page 8 of the report.

4.6 Members should note that HMIe comment on examples of good practice. The report indicated that three examples of good practice were:

- Use of award systems to recognise and celebrate learners' achievements
- The impact of expressive arts activities on children's confidence and motivation

4.7 The school has devised a school improvement plan and the authority will work closely with the school to ensure its continued progress.

4.8 The report on St John's Primary School should be set in the context of Inverclyde. This is a very good report in the context of reports on Inverclyde schools.



**St John's Primary School
Port Glasgow
Inverclyde Council
29 September 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

² Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school

St John's Primary School is a denominational school. It serves an area of Port Glasgow. The roll was 176 when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children's behaviour, respect for each other and eagerness to learn.
- Staff teamwork and their success in creating an inclusive learning environment.
- Links with support agencies.
- Shared values which underpin the work of the whole school community.
- The headteacher's commitment to improving the quality of children's learning and wider achievements.

3. Examples of good practice

- Use of award systems to recognise and celebrate learners' achievements.
- The impact of expressive arts activities on children's confidence and motivation.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children enjoy school. They are motivated to do their best and are respectful of each other. They respond very well to the increasing

opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. In P6, children complete their learning journals well and use these to think about how they can improve their learning. The school intends to extend the use of learning journals to all stages. Children benefit from more active approaches to learning, particularly at the early stages. At all stages, children make some use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning. They often work in pairs and small groups. They are developing their confidence and self-esteem very well, for example, by taking part in musical and artistic activities. Children are improving their citizenship skills successfully by working together in teams. They make effective contributions to interesting enterprise initiatives, such as the Valentine's Café, residential trips to Castle Toward and whole-school shows.

In recent years, attainment in English language and mathematics has varied. This year's attainment in reading and mathematics has risen as a result of more focused tracking of children's performance. Most children are making good progress in reading and mathematics and the majority in writing. The school recognises what needs to be done to improve attainment in writing. Higher-achieving children are capable of making progress at a faster pace. In English language, almost all children listen very attentively to their teachers and to each other. They show increasing confidence in speaking to an audience and reporting and communicating their opinions in groups and in class discussions. Most like to read and do so with good understanding and expression. By P7, children are writing for a range of purposes and a few are skilled at writing at length. Standards of presentation in written work in jotters and on display are very good. In mathematics, almost all children are accurate in written and mental calculations. In P4 children are very secure when making calculations involving money. Across the school, most children can use a range of strategies to carry out problem-solving activities.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum. Activities are well planned and offer most children the right amount of challenge,

enjoyment and relevance. Staff have begun to develop a more flexible approach to delivering the curriculum in line with the principles of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. As a result, there is an improving emphasis on interdisciplinary work and active learning. For example, staff are making better use of real life contexts when planning children's writing and making links to other areas of the curriculum. Children benefit from very well-developed programmes in music, art and design, enterprise and health education. Across the year, the school provides all children with two hours good quality physical education. More needs to be done to give children more regular access to ICT within classrooms to consolidate and extend their skills.

Across the school, staff meet children's needs well. Staff know the strengths and learning needs of the children in their class. They identify appropriately the children who need extra help with their learning. The support for learning teacher provides well-targeted support to individuals and groups of children. Individual learning plans are in place for those who require them. These are reviewed regularly with the full and active involvement of parents. Classroom and learning assistants are highly valued by staff and parents. They are very caring and attentive to children's needs. Senior staff should now review their deployment to ensure they are used most effectively to support all learners. Teachers value children. They use praise very well to motivate and encourage children to do their best. They plan tasks and activities which sustain interest and challenge for most children. Teachers now need to check more often what children have learned and discuss with them how their learning can be improved. More needs to be done to challenge higher-achieving children. Teachers should provide more evaluative written feedback to learners and help them set learning targets through the personal learning planning process. Teachers set homework tasks regularly for reading, spelling and mathematics. A review of homework tasks is planned.

5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Staff work very successfully with a very wide range of support agencies who provide valued advice and effective support to children and their families. The school has received distinction as a Dyslexia Friendly School. The positive benefits to a number of children are clear. Staff work closely with the well-established and supportive parent-teacher association and Parent Council. They both helped to develop the school's core values. Parents appreciate the way these are used to support learning. The school deals effectively with the very few concerns or complaints raised by parents. Regular newsletters, written reports and curriculum meetings keep parents well informed about their children's progress. Children entering P1 are supported through a well-planned induction programme. Staff now need to take greater account of transition information provided by pre-school staff. Children in P7 benefit from the well-established transition arrangements to St Stephen's High School.

6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Children make valuable contributions to improving their school. At all stages, they have many opportunities to exercise responsibility. The pupil council has influenced a number of improvements to the school grounds. These include new benches, a memory tree and the creation of a garden. They have plans to develop the garden area further and to create an outdoor learning space. Children are increasingly aware of sustainability issues. They are proud of their bronze Eco-Schools Scotland award and their accreditation as a Health Promoting School. Staff are committed to school improvement. They have been enthusiastic in taking forward recent improvements to the way the school evaluates its work. Teachers are now regularly involved in tracking children's attainment and reviewing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching. Senior staff discuss teachers' plans, visit classrooms and provide written feedback to teachers.

They now need to improve the quality of this written feedback. In the past the school improvement plan contained too many areas for improvement. The school has however successfully achieved a number of these areas for improvement.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

In St John's Primary School, relationships are strong and firmly embedded in a shared sense of faith and community. The school's core values underpin the work of the school. Children are very well behaved and are particularly proud of their school. They show high levels of respect for each other and staff. Very high-quality displays of children's art work adorn the walls and classrooms. The 'Praise' board is used very successfully by staff to recognise children's achievements both in school and in the community. All staff are well informed about safeguarding procedures and take appropriate steps to ensure children's safety. Regular assemblies and religious services led by the school chaplain enable children, parents and staff to celebrate their faith together. The school's Active Schools coordinator works closely with the school to ensure children understand the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Children believe they are treated fairly and equally. They know their worries will be listened to and dealt with effectively. Anti-sectarianism is successfully promoted through religious education and topic work.

8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The headteacher, staff and children of St John's Primary School share the same goal to continue to improve the work of the school. The headteacher has been in post for nearly three years. Over this time he has made notable improvements to tracking children's attainment, reviewing the curriculum and sharing leadership for learning. These initiatives have impacted positively on children's learning experiences. He has the full support of his depute headteacher who is highly regarded by staff. Staff are committed to school improvement and

have welcomed and responded positively to opportunities to lead and take part in working groups. Encouraged by the headteacher, the school is well placed to improve further.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits following this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to raise attainment in writing.
- Ensure consistently high-quality learning and teaching.
- Continue to improve the level of challenge for higher-achieving children.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for St John's Primary School.

Improvements in performance	good
Learners' experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

HM Inspector: Marion Burns
29 September 2009

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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses