

**Crosshouse Primary School  
East Ayrshire Council  
13 June 2006**

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## 1. Background

Crosshouse Primary School was inspected in March 2006 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school serves the village of Crosshouse and the surrounding area. A special facility, catering for the needs of pupils with language and communication difficulties drawn from across the authority, was located within the school. At the time of the inspection the roll of the school was 238, including 15 pupils in the Communication Centre. The school's depute headteacher had responsibility for support for learning in the school. A second depute headteacher had responsibility for the day to day running of the Communication Centre. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Teamwork and commitment of the hard-working staff.
- Partnership with parents and the local community, and curricular links with Grange Academy.
- Pupils' very good start to their learning at P1.
- Pupils' knowledge about the benefits of healthy eating, and their progress in science in the upper stages.
- Approaches to the promotion of positive behaviour and the development of pupils' life skills in the Communication Centre.
- Very good progress of pupils in the Communication Centre in all aspects of their learning.

## 3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents felt welcome in the school and appreciated the concern shown by staff for children's care and welfare. Parents felt that the Communication Centre was well led and had a good reputation in the community. About a third of parents who responded to questionnaires would have liked more information about the school's priorities for improvement. A similar number, and about half of pupils, felt that standards of behaviour of some pupils were not good enough. Pupils felt that teachers explained things clearly, checked homework regularly and expected them to work hard. About a third felt that pupils were not always treated fairly and that the school did not deal well with incidents of bullying. Staff enjoyed working in the school and felt that they worked well together. They appreciated pupils' enthusiasm for learning, but about a third felt that pupils' behaviour needed to improve. Most support staff did not feel fully involved in the school's decision-making process, nor able to use their training time effectively.

## 4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

The school provided pupils with a broad curriculum overall. The school had developed its approaches to health promotion and, as a result, pupils were developing a sound understanding of the importance of healthy eating. An initiative to develop science in the school had improved pupils' learning experiences at the upper stages. Additional time had been allocated to the teaching of writing and mathematics, but the school had not yet evaluated the effectiveness of this. The school did not place enough emphasis on

developing pupils' personal and social skills. Some pupils at P7 did not receive appropriate time for physical education. Pupils had too few opportunities to develop their skills in English language, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum. The quality of teaching was good, and there were examples of very good, inspirational teaching. Teachers were well organised and planned their lessons carefully. Many used questions skilfully to check understanding and to extend pupils' thinking. In the best lessons, teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils and held helpful reviews of learning at the end. However, teachers overall did not use a wide enough range of teaching approaches, particularly in English language and mathematics. They set regular homework to extend pupils' learning but many tasks lacked variety.

Throughout the school, most pupils worked hard at tasks set for them. Pupils' learning was enriched by very good contributions from visiting specialists in dance, singing and percussion. Many demonstrated a good knowledge of poetry and songs in the Scots language. Pupils at P6 and P7 were developing good listening, talking and reading skills in German. In some lessons, for example in science and enterprise education, pupils worked well together at practical activities and were beginning to play an active part in their learning. However, this active approach to learning was not consistent across the curriculum. Pupils at P1 made a very good start to their learning, particularly through high quality play experiences. Across the school, many tasks did not offer sufficient challenge to higher achieving pupils. The overall pace of learning was too slow.

Many pupils were making good progress in developing confidence and self-esteem. In almost all classes, pupils cooperated well with teachers and with each other. However, pupils throughout the school had insufficient opportunities to exercise responsibility. The pupil council involved pupils from P3 to P7, from the school and the Communication Centre, in discussing aspects of school life. Pupils did not have a positive view of their role in improving aspects of the school. Many pupils further developed their skills and interests through a range of activities in addition to the formal curriculum including football, art and languages clubs. The school choir entertained local community with regular concerts. Pupils learned very effectively about the world of work through several well-planned, interesting enterprise projects for which the school had won an award.

### **English language in the school**

The quality of attainment in English language was adequate. Standards in reading had dropped in recent years. They had fluctuated in writing. Across the school, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. A few achieved them earlier than might normally be expected. Although pupils were making good progress with coursework, it did not always challenge pupils sufficiently. Across the school, most pupils listened to teachers' instructions and responded appropriately. Pupils at P7 gave talks to classmates on subjects of their own choosing. However, they did not contribute appropriately in group discussions. A few pupils at each stage talked enthusiastically about books they had read, but many, particularly boys, did not regularly read for pleasure. At P4, pupils were skilled in reading to research information. Across the school, pupils wrote well for a wide range of purposes. Most were skilled in writing letters and reports in connection with topic work. A few higher achieving pupils needed more opportunities to write imaginatively at length. Standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation were good overall.

## **Mathematics in the school**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. It had improved over recent years. Across the school, almost all pupils were attaining appropriate national levels. A number of pupils at P2 achieved these levels early, but this early good progress was not sustained in later years. Most pupils coped well with the work set in class. This did not always offer sufficient challenge to all pupils. Across the school, pupils were confident in interpreting information from a range of graphs. Pupils at P5 had created particularly useful graphs on the computer as part of an enterprise project. At all stages, pupils were quick and accurate at mental calculation and had a sound grasp of arithmetical processes. They had a good knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Some pupils were able to use problem-solving strategies well, but this was not consistent in all classes. Pupils throughout the school had insufficient opportunities to use ICT to develop their learning in mathematics. At P7, an initiative carried out in partnership with teachers from Grange Academy and aimed at developing pupils' attainment in mathematics, was enhancing pupils' learning.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

The school provided an adequate level of pastoral care for pupils. Staff knew pupils well and showed a high degree of care and concern for their welfare. Pupils could describe what to do if they were upset. In class, most pupils were well behaved and cooperative with each other. However, the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils outwith the classroom showed a marked degree of intolerance. The school's procedures for promoting positive behaviour required to be developed further in partnership with pupils, staff and parents.

The school's depute headteacher had overall responsibility for the coordination of support for learning. There were important weaknesses in the school's arrangements for supporting pupils' learning. The groupings of pupils in several classes did not fully support their learning needs. Tasks and activities in some classes were not always well matched to the needs of higher achieving pupils. As a result, a number of pupils were not making appropriate progress in their learning. The behaviour of a few pupils occasionally disrupted the learning of others. Support staff made valued contributions to pupils' learning in class and to their play experiences at P1. The visiting support for learning teacher provided additional support to groups of pupils, but this was not aimed effectively enough at meeting the needs of wide range of pupils. Across the school, a significant number of pupils had a wide range of additional support needs. Visiting specialist teachers for pupils with a range of sensory and communication difficulties made a very positive contribution to supporting pupils' learning. The school had created appropriate individualised educational programmes for pupils experiencing difficulties, but did not make enough use of them to involve parents or to track pupils' progress. Overall, procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils with additional support needs were not rigorous enough. Pupils in the school and Communication Centre who had a Record of Needs received well-managed support. Their needs were reviewed appropriately. Class teachers and other staff worked flexibly to ensure that pupils with additional support needs were included and supported in class activities.

## **The Communication Centre**

The Communication Centre provided a broad and well-structured curriculum which enhanced pupils' communication and personal and social skills. Pupils were making good progress in English language and mathematics. Almost all pupils were learning effective communication skills. They were able to identify the importance of visual cues and eye contact in talking to others. Pupils overall were making good progress with reading skills. They wrote well for a wide range of audiences. In mathematics, pupils achieved well in their coursework and worked effectively at practical tasks. Most pupils made steady progress in overtaking the targets which had been set for them. Teachers provided a wide range of outings and trips into the local community to allow pupils to develop their skills in a relevant context. Several pupils from the Centre joined relevant mainstream classes for aspects of their curriculum such as environmental studies. A few mainstream pupils joined pupils in the Centre for aspects of personal and social development. Overall, however, there were insufficient opportunities for staff and pupils from the Centre and mainstream classes to work in partnership.

The Communication Centre provided a very good standard of pastoral care. Staff were vigilant about pupils' health and safety. They were fully aware of the agreed policies and procedures of the Centre on, for example, anti-bullying and child protection. Teachers and other staff worked well to support pupils during their lessons. Pupils were making very good progress across the curriculum, which was individually tailored to meet each pupil's specific needs. Pupils were set a good range of tasks in class, but a few needed to be given work which would challenge them more. The speech and language therapist attended the school regularly and provided valued support and guidance for pupils, parents and staff.

The deputy headteacher with responsibility for the Centre had created a strong sense of teamwork among staff. She had developed a wide set of effective links with appropriate agencies and fostered effective partnership working with parents. Staff now needed to develop more rigorous tracking and reporting of pupils' attainment in all curricular areas, linked to 5-14 levels.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was adequate. Classrooms were generally spacious and sound. The school had an ICT suite and library. Access for people with mobility difficulties was limited. The building was in a poor state of decoration and repair. Some classrooms became too hot to allow pupils to work comfortably. The gymnasium/dining room, which had a good set of changing rooms, was housed in a separate building in the school playground. An issue concerning school security was brought to the attention of the school and education authority. The playground set aside for the Communication Centre was safe and secure but did not allow appropriate interaction between pupils from the Centre and pupils in mainstream classes.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Relationships between staff and pupils were good overall. Staff teamwork was good and their morale was high. Most staff had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and social skills in class. They used praise well to motivate pupils. However, staff expectations for pupils' attainment were not high enough. The school had appropriate procedures and policy for combating racism. Staff actively promoted a sense of equality and fairness in class and through assemblies. However, these approaches were not always effective. At P7, a few pupils did not fully understand the need for tolerance of ethnic and religious diversity. Approaches to promoting positive behaviour were not consistent enough across all aspects of school life. A few pupils did not always show respect to staff and to each other. The school chaplain visited the school regularly, took assemblies and gave good opportunities for religious observance. The school celebrated pupils' achievements at lively, interesting weekly assemblies.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The School Board took a keen, supportive interest in the school. The PTA organised successful fund-raising and social events. Local police and health staff provided useful assistance with aspects of the school's health education programme. Local residents enjoyed the school choir's regular concerts. The school informed parents about its work through parents' meetings and two helpful annual written reports on pupils' progress. The school and Communication Centre shared aspects of school life, but there was scope to develop this partnership further. The school's curricular links with Grange Academy were particularly strong. Parents were consulted appropriately about sensitive health issues.

## 7. Improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

The school provided a caring learning environment. Teachers were hard working and committed to providing a quality education for all pupils. Most were eager to take part in more staff development opportunities so that they could improve pupils' learning. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was high, but attainment in reading was adequate and has deteriorated. In too many classes, teachers did not ensure that tasks and resources matched pupils' needs closely enough, particularly those of higher achieving pupils. As a result, a number of pupils did not make sufficient progress in their learning. The school's approaches to promotion of positive behaviour were not effective enough.

There were important weaknesses in the leadership of the school. The headteacher was committed to the school. Prior to her absence, she had begun to develop the school's approaches to learning and teaching, and had worked hard to create supportive partnerships with parents and a range of external agencies. She had initiated a number of self-evaluation procedures including the use of quality indicators developed nationally. The school had taken some positive steps to improve communication with parents and to consult pupils about the work of the school. Further progress was now needed in these areas. The school's approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of its work did not focus sufficiently on the quality of pupils' experiences across the curriculum. Planning for improvement was not monitored systematically to ensure that there was a positive impact on pupils' learning experiences. The education authority should continue to play a key role in developing leadership for learning within the school and in building the school's capacity to improve its work.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- approaches to promoting positive behaviour in the school;
- pupils' attainment and achievement in English language in the school;
- the level of support and challenge offered to pupils in the school to ensure that the learning needs of all pupils, including higher achieving pupils, are met;
- approaches to learning and teaching to enable pupils to become more actively involved with their learning;
- links between the school and the Communication Centre; and
- leadership for learning, including self-evaluation, to ensure that all pupils in the school and the Centre are making appropriate progress.

### **What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Anne M McGachey  
HM Inspector

13 June 2006

## Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

<b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	
Structure of the curriculum	adequate
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	adequate
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good
Personal and social development in the Communication Centre	very good

<b>How well are pupils supported?</b>	
Pastoral care	adequate
Meeting pupils' needs	weak

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Accommodation and facilities	adequate
Climate and relationships	adequate
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	adequate
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	good

<b>Improving the school</b>	
Leadership	weak
Self-evaluation	weak

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

excellent	excellent
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<b>What parents thought the school did well</b>	<b>What parents think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents felt welcome in the school.</li> <li>• Their children enjoyed school and found work stimulating and challenging.</li> <li>• Staff showed a high level of care and concern for children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About half of the parents who responded to questionnaires would like more information about the school's priorities for improvement.</li> <li>• About a third felt that the school did not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. A quarter felt that there was not mutual respect between pupils and staff.</li> <li>• About a quarter felt that the school did not let them know their children's strengths and weaknesses, and did not set high standards for their attainment.</li> </ul>
<b>What pupils thought the school did well</b>	<b>What pupils think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers helped them with their work.</li> <li>• Teachers expected them to work hard.</li> <li>• The school helped pupils keep themselves safe and healthy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils could improve.</li> <li>• Not all pupils were treated fairly.</li> <li>• The school did not deal well with all incidents of bullying.</li> </ul>

<b>What staff thought the school did well</b>	<b>What staff think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff felt they showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils.</li> <li>• Staff liked working in the school.</li> <li>• Staff in the Communication Centre liked the mutual respect between staff and pupils and felt that the Centre was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork of senior managers.</li> <li>• About a third of teachers and support staff felt that indiscipline was not dealt with effectively, and that standards of pupils' behaviour were not consistently upheld.</li> </ul> <p>Most support staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not feel that their staff training time was used effectively; and</li> <li>• did not feel fully involved in the school's decision-making process.</li> </ul> <p>Staff in the Communication Centre had no significant issues.</p>

## **How can you contact us?**

### **If you would like an additional copy of this report**

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Educational and Social Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, Acting HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

### **Our complaints procedure**

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk).

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