

**Bruntsfield Primary School  
The City of Edinburgh Council  
14 October 2008**

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## 1. Background

Bruntsfield Primary School was inspected in June 2008 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 innovation, and its 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 Parent Council and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The school serves the Bruntsfield area of Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection the roll was 413. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' achievements in citizenship and aspects of enterprise in education.
- Broad opportunities for pupils' wider achievements through clubs, educational excursions and sporting activities.
- The commitment and hard work of the headteacher, promoted staff, teachers and ancillary staff, ensuring pupils' wellbeing and the involvement of parents in their children's learning.
- The school's strong programme for health education and promotion, including its very successful health week.

## 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 expressed largely positive views about the school and its work. They valued the school's ethos, which they believed had many positive features. Most felt that leadership was good and communication with parents was mainly effective. Almost all believed that office and support staff, senior managers and teachers made them feel welcome and

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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.

respected their views. Almost all pupils enjoyed being at school. They felt safe and well looked after. They believed that teachers were good at encouraging them and helping them with their learning, and they liked the wide range of clubs and activities which the school provided. Some were disappointed that not all activities were open to all pupils. Teachers liked working in the school and expressed positive views about many aspects of its work. All believed that staff were caring and sensitive to pupils' needs. They thought that there was mutual respect between pupils and teachers. The majority felt that the school was well led but some thought that teamwork among senior staff, and communication between them and the rest of the staff, needed to be improved. Support staff expressed largely positive views about much of the school's work but were less positive about aspects of communication, teamwork, leadership and their involvement in decision making.

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

##### **Learners' experiences**

The curriculum provided a good range of suitable experiences for pupils. Staff had reviewed it in light of the design principles of the national *Curriculum for Excellence* programme. The school had taken effective steps to ensure children's smooth transition from nursery into P1. Some important developments such as the promotion of active learning had still to achieve an impact on learning and teaching beyond the early stages. Staff had improved some aspects of English language and mathematics, but more remained to be done to bring these programmes into line with best practice. The programme in personal and social development included particularly effective coverage of health education and promotion. All pupils received good quality physical education (PE) each week, in line with national recommendations. Teaching was inconsistent in its quality, ranging from excellent to weak. Staff had begun to consider national advice on the roles of assessment in learning but many were still at an early stage of implementing best practice. Teachers gave clear instructions and explanations and mainly used teaching approaches which met pupils' needs. Some were very skilled at using questioning to challenge and check pupils' learning, building well on their responses. Staff used homework well to support and extend classroom learning, helpfully involving parents, but tasks often lacked variety and were not of consistently high quality.

The quality of learners' experiences was good. Most pupils were well motivated and the majority clearly enjoyed much of their learning. They cooperated well in group work, and showed good independence when given the opportunity to organise aspects of their own learning. They discussed the next steps in their learning with teachers but sometimes needed clearer advice on how to improve their work. Most pupils confidently presented their views and ideas to others in class and at assemblies. They had commendable opportunities to raise their awareness in, and develop skills relating to, citizenship, sustainable development and enterprise. Pupils learned good skills through the programme in information and communications technology (ICT) but did not have enough opportunities to apply these important skills across different areas of the curriculum.

## **Improvements in performance**

The school had maintained positive standards in recent years. Overall, pupils' attainment was good and the school continued to promote their wider achievements. Staff had introduced improvements to programmes, learning and teaching. Overall, the school demonstrated good improvements in its performance.

Pupils had attained good standards in English language over a number of years. There had been a slight dip in pupils' attainment in reading in 2006, but their performance in writing had improved steadily over the last four years. Most pupils from P3 to P7 were attaining appropriate national levels and, at all stages, many pupils exceeded these levels. Pupils with additional support needs who were working towards personal learning targets were progressing well. At all stages, higher attaining pupils needed more challenging tasks. Pupils listened carefully to teachers' instructions and explanations, and to classmates' contributions to class and group discussions. They were articulate and confident in posing questions. Pupils were skilful at reading for information and most showed interest in reading for pleasure. They read fluently and with expression, and showed a sound understanding of writers' different styles and skills. By P7, pupils could read unseen texts confidently and express opinions about books and authors they liked. Pupils responded well to the wide range of opportunities to write, including poetry, letters and the P7 yearbook. When given the opportunity, they wrote pieces of good length, for example related to their current environmental studies topic. Some lost interest in their writing when asked to redraft it too often, and there was clear scope for greater use of ICT. Overall, pupils did not consistently present their work to a high enough standard.

Pupils' attained good overall standards in mathematics. The school had maintained consistently good levels of attainment, apart from a dip in 2006 which staff had taken steps to address. Most pupils from P2 to P7 were attaining or exceeding appropriate national levels. A few pupils at all stages were capable of achieving more and needed to experience greater pace and challenge. Pupils who required additional help with their learning were making good progress. At all stages, pupils could create and interpret an appropriate range of graphs. They were able to organise information gathered from practical surveys in different ways. Overall, pupils were developing useful skills in written calculation. At some stages, they were less skilled in mental calculation. Pupils in P7 had a good understanding of the relationship between fractions and decimals. Overall, pupils showed good skills in number, money and measurement. Pupils had too few opportunities to practice skills of numeracy in different contexts and curriculum areas. They could identify two- and three-dimensional shapes and discuss their properties. At all stages, pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems and discussing strategies were under developed.

Pupils showed some developing skills in music, for example demonstrating a good sense of rhythm when playing a game of "musical dominoes". Many were skilful at sports and games, showing good balance, coordination and stamina in the PE programme and in activities offered as part of the annual health week. Pupils were knowledgeable about factors influencing healthy lifestyles and could discuss key nutrition messages. Most showed good recall of aspects of social studies, from topics which they had studied. By P7, pupils had good knowledge of important aspects of science, developed in part through a project involving associated primary schools and staff from Boroughmuir High School.

Staff were committed and successful in promoting pupils' wider achievements. Most pupils took part in the very wide range of after-school clubs, developing new skills, extending their self-confidence and social skills and encouraging a positive attitude to facing new experiences and learning new skills. Pupils showed many of the characteristics of successful learners such as enjoyment in their learning and good progress across a range of learning activities. They demonstrated confidence in social situations and showed suitable self-assurance in making presentations. Pupils from the school were currently Edinburgh City champions in badminton, touch rugby and basketball. These enhancing activities gave pupils important additional opportunities to perform and demonstrate specific abilities outwith formal classwork. The school's P1 to P7 programme for citizenship had several strong features. The pupil council considered important issues including how best to encourage children to choose healthy snacks, and met with Edinburgh Council staff to discuss safe cycling routes to school. With parents, staff and the wider community, pupils were active in social enterprises such as fundraising for important residential facilities for a South African township school. Staff and pupils had worked well together to achieve the bronze Eco-Schools Scotland award, building pupils' awareness of issues of sustainable development. Pupils demonstrated their enterprise skills at an annual enterprise assembly. They demonstrated enterprising learning at showcase afternoons throughout the year, through topics such as Mary Queen of Scots and the John Muir Award.

Staff had made steady progress with priorities in the school improvement plan. The headteacher had provided strong leadership in developing a good organisational framework for planning and implementing improvements. The school demonstrated a clear commitment to continuing improvement, and had the leadership and teaching capacity to achieve that improvement.

## **5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?**

Teachers took appropriate account of the needs of pupils when planning learning experiences. They grouped pupils of similar levels of attainment together for some learning activities. Class tasks sometimes offered too little challenge for higher attaining pupils. Learning assistants worked effectively with class teachers to support identified pupils. Arrangements for communication and coordination of their contributions were not consistently effective. The support for learning teacher provided a range of valued services. She gave very skilful tutorial support for groups and individual pupils. Working well with support agencies and parents, she accurately identified pupils' learning needs and prepared suitable individualised educational programmes (IEPs). She contributed well to initiatives designed to meet some of the needs of higher attaining pupils, including a programme of enhanced activities in mathematics and the philosophers' club. She needed greater opportunity to influence the school's strategy and broader capacity to support pupils, through a stronger emphasis on staff development and consultancy for teachers. The school worked well with agencies to provide important support for pupils' learning. However, its efforts to implement coordinated support planning arrangements were being held back by delays in processing planning documents centrally within the education authority.

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

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>Arrangements for pupils' care and welfare were very strong. Staff made effective use of relevant education authority policies and guidelines to provide a good framework to safeguard pupils. Pupils' social and emotional needs, including those of vulnerable children, were well known, sensitively shared and acted upon. All staff were trained regularly in child protection and the school had shown a conscientious, caring approach when pursuing concerns about pupils. Effective guidelines protected pupils from unsuitable access to the Internet. Staff were diligent in monitoring pupils' attendance and took appropriate action if pupils were absent. Training was required to update staff on issues associated with some pupils' special dietary requirements. The school worked well with a wide range of pre-school centres to support the transfer of children into P1. Transition of pupils from P7 to Boroughmuir High School was well designed to meet their pastoral and learning support needs, and there had been some effective curricular links, including an innovative programme for science.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The school's resources and space were very well managed. The accommodation provided a safe and attractive environment, largely achieved through the commitment of staff to make the most of the old building. Access for disabled users was very difficult. Pupils' movement was carefully managed, although the time taken for them to move to class and to start work sometimes impacted heavily on teaching time. Display was used very effectively to provide a sense of welcome to pupils, parents and visitors, act as a stimulus for learning and celebrate pupils' achievement. Despite its age, the building was well maintained and kept very clean. The school library, two gymnasia, small swimming pool, dining hall and ICT room provided good teaching spaces. Although the playground was small, it provided an attractive area due to the creativity and imagination of staff and parents.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>Pupils, parents and staff were proud of the school. Senior managers, teachers and support staff related well within their separate teams but needed to work more effectively as one unified team. They all shared a common commitment to pupils' progress but did not consistently respect the contribution of others. Pupils and staff related well together. Staff shared high expectations of pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement but there remained scope for more consistently high expectations of pupils' attainment. Overall, teachers used praise well to reward and promote achievement. Pupils were very well behaved, polite and hard working. Each class identified a pupil of the week, recognising achievements in one of the aspects of <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i>. The school provided very effective opportunities for pupils to consider issues of equality, often making sensitive and effective use of the wide variety of cultures represented among the pupils' families. Pupils had won national competitions to challenge racism and bullying. A book of pupils' "stories of migration from a school community" had been published with funding from the Scottish Arts Council. It had been displayed in an art gallery and broadcast on national radio. Pupils enjoyed assemblies, such as the special event marking the beginning of the annual health week. Assemblies, which were often led by pupils, also provided valuable opportunities for religious observance and recognising pupils' achievements.</p>



Aspect	Comment
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school had developed very successful, productive relationships with parents carers and families over many years. The headteacher recognised the need to maintain these relationships carefully, and to take steps to monitor parents' collective views. Parents valued opportunities to keep in touch with the work of the school through parents' evenings, workshops, reports on pupils' achievements and newsletters. Many were involved in supporting classes on educational excursions, in after-school clubs and in classwork. They were encouraged and supported to work with their children on homework. Senior staff balanced carefully the need to keep access to the school secure for pupils, whilst making parents feel welcome and their views valued. Parents were appropriately consulted, for example on sensitive health issues and when pupils had additional support needs. The Parent Council took a closely supportive and businesslike interest in the school's work. It had worked well with the headteacher to improve communication with parents, establish a valuable website and seek parents' views on key areas of interest. The school worked closely with other schools in its cluster, for example developing a common policy for higher attaining pupils.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

Bruntsfield Primary School provided a good and improving quality of education. Staff shared a common interest in pupils' welfare and worked hard to meet pupils' needs. Pupils experienced a good curriculum, with some very strong features including a range of opportunities for wider achievement. The school performed well in many respects. However, staff needed to improve aspects of teamwork and focus more effectively on improving learning and teaching to raise pupils' attainments further.

The headteacher had a clear vision for the school, which she had made some progress in sharing with staff and parents. In her short time in post, she had developed a sound basis for improving the school's performance. She was very hard working and highly committed to the pupils. She demonstrated strong organisational skills and was appropriately committed to developing her leadership and management skills. The remits of the two depute headteachers provided them with opportunities to play significant roles in the school. Both made important contributions to leading key aspects of the curriculum, in ICT and modern languages. Both needed to give a clearer emphasis to leading and managing the school as members of the senior management team, whilst maintaining some appropriate teaching duties. The principal teacher provided a very strong role model as an exemplary classroom practitioner and through her chairmanship of working groups. The business manager made a strong contribution

to ensuring the smooth running of the school, and provided the headteacher with valued financial management information. The school's approaches to judging the quality of its work had some positive features. Senior managers monitored staff forward plans and surveyed samples of pupils' work on a regular basis. They visited classrooms informally, and on a planned basis, to gather information about the quality of pupils' learning. These were valuable approaches but feedback to staff was too general and did not consistently lead to improvements. Senior managers and teachers reviewed attainment data but lacked some skills in interpreting the data and making decisions about pupils' progress. Their approaches to setting targets were too broad. The school relied too heavily on informal sources of stakeholder views, such as comments from parents' evenings, and needed to establish more effective approaches. The school had clear potential for continuous improvement and had begun to realise that potential more fully.

### **Main points for action**

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

- the effectiveness of self-evaluation in supporting further enhancements to the quality of pupils' learning and their overall attainment, in the context of the school's development of *Curriculum for Excellence*;
- the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum;
- meeting pupils' learning needs, through more strategic use of staff expertise and more effective liaison; and
- staff teamwork, building on mutual respect for the commitment of all members of the school team.

### **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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Bill Geddes  
HM Inspector

14 October 2008

## 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>	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	good
Improvements in performance	good

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting learning needs	good

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	very good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	very good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Developing people and partnerships	satisfactory
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

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

## 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>• Almost all thought that the school had a very strong reputation in the community.</li> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome in the school and kept them well informed about pupils' progress and the school's work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents thought that aspects of leadership across the school could be improved.</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 encouraged them and praised them when they did something well.</li> <li>• Teachers explained things clearly and helped them when they found tasks difficult.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around a quarter thought that activities were not always open to all pupils.</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>• Teachers liked working in the school and found pupils to be enthusiastic learners.</li> <li>• The school related well with parents and the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff thought that the school would benefit from better teamwork.</li> <li>• Some teachers and support staff believed that aspects of leadership and communication could be improved at all levels.</li> </ul>

### **Appendix 3 Good practice**

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of innovative and effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

#### **Citizenship**

Staff identified a need to develop citizenship within the school, following the experience of a teacher exchange programme to America. A group of teachers worked together to produce a programme of learning to develop citizenship from P1 to P7. This was shared with staff and resources produced to support the learning outcomes. Character trait posters were designed and displayed to raise awareness around the school.

Classes work through a programme designed to develop character traits, such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness and caring. Pupils work towards earning badges when they display the skills around the school. Achievements are celebrated during weekly assemblies with Curriculum for Excellence Certificates.

Children hold leadership responsibilities in school such as Pupil Council, eco group and Peer Mediators and work with each other and staff to lead citizenship in school and promote good citizenship in the playground and the community.

This has resulted in the pupils having a valued voice within the school and increased sense of responsibility for the work they do. Staff have found the Citizenship programme promotes positive behaviour and equality within the school and helped develop a very strong school ethos. Staff welcome and value children, families and staff from all nationalities and this adds richness to the culture of the school.

## **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 Children and Families, 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, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8371. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure**

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

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail [HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk). A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 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 (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: [ask@spso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spso.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spso.org.uk](http://www.spso.org.uk).

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