

# Inspection of Standards and Quality in Dounby Primary School Orkney Islands Council

28 October 2003

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## 1. Introduction

Dounby Primary School was inspected in June 2003 as part of a national sample of primary education. An integrated inspection of pre-school provision was carried out at the same time by the Care Commission and is the subject of a separate report. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, mathematics and technology within environmental studies.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, and to samples of staff and pupils. A member of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and representatives of the parent teacher association (PTA).

## **2. The school**

The school serves the parishes of Sandwick, Harray and Birsay in the north-west of mainland Orkney. At the time of the inspection the roll was 152.

### **Parents' views**

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the work of the school. Almost all thought that:

- \* their children found school work stimulating and challenging and teachers set high standards for attainment;
- \* school reports gave helpful information about their children's progress and parents' evenings were helpful and informative;
- \* school buildings were kept in good order; and
- \* the school had a good reputation in the local community and was well led.

A few parents commented that the frequency of parents' evenings and reports on their children's progress was too low.

### **Ethos**

The school had a climate in which all pupils were valued, treated fairly and included in all aspects of school life. The school provided a welcoming atmosphere for parents and visitors. Pupils were polite and very well behaved. Relationships between staff and pupils were almost always very good, and pupils responded well to the use of praise. While staff had very high expectations for achievement, pupils were not yet fully involved in monitoring and tracking their own progress. Weekly assemblies were used to celebrate a wide range of pupil success and

for appropriate and innovative religious observance. Attendance was above national levels.

### **School and community**

The school had formed very good links with parents, educational support services, other schools and the wider community.

Notable features included:

- \* the very active and supportive School Board and PTA;
- \* the use of community facilities in the school;
- \* links with local business for work in technology;
- \* the involvement of the school in the development of a new care residence in Dounby;
- \* the development of e-mail links to enhance the learning of German;
- \* very informative letters to parents which summarised their children's work for the coming term; and
- \* the very good transfer arrangements with nursery and the secondary school.

### **Accommodation**

The quality of accommodation was generally very good. The school was set in extensive and attractive grounds. The original building had been extended and refurbished to a very high standard. There was an open and welcoming reception area. Teaching areas were very spacious and included an area for art and a computer suite. Pupils' work was displayed throughout the school, although these displays could be better organised. The extension contained very good facilities for the local community that were available for use by the school. While

reception staff were on duty throughout the school day to receive and sign-in visitors, the school and education authority needed to continue current procedures to monitor any potential risk to pupils' safety through community access to the school building.

### **Staffing and resources**

The school was very well staffed. Visiting teachers and classroom assistants provided very good support for pupils and worked very well with staff. Office and janitorial staff made valuable contributions to the work of the school. Resources were very good, though more were required for technology at the upper stages. The headteacher managed the school's finances very well and ensured that resources were used effectively to improve pupils' learning and attainment.

### 3. How well are pupils performing?

#### English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in *listening, talking, reading and writing*. Many achieved these standards early and a significant number were exceeding them. The school had made steady progress in raising standards in reading and writing in recent years. Almost all pupils were making very good progress in their coursework. They listened attentively and responded well to teachers' instructions and explanations. At all stages, pupils could express their views and opinions clearly and talk about texts they had read. Some pupils needed to develop further their skills in talking in groups. Most pupils read for enjoyment and showed a good understanding of their reading. Written work was well presented with appropriate attention paid to spelling and punctuation. Pupils at all stages had well-developed library reference skills.

#### Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Almost all pupils at the early stages, and most at the middle and upper stages, were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in *information handling, shape, position and movement, and number, money and measurement*. Almost all pupils at the early stages were achieving these levels early and some at the upper stages were exceeding them. Most pupils were making very good progress with their coursework, which was generally appropriately challenging. They showed good skills with number, particularly in oral mental mathematics. Pupils at the upper stages could select appropriate strategies to solve mathematical problems, and they worked together enthusiastically on these. Too few

pupils had used spreadsheets or databases to organise and display information.

## **Technology**

The overall quality of attainment in technology was good. Pupils at the early stages displayed a very good understanding of factors affecting designs. They produced very good quality sketches of their designs for bird tables and used tools well to shape clay. Those at the middle stages worked collaboratively to effectively build and test bridge structures. However, older pupils' understanding of the design cycle and of the steps required to develop, evaluate and improve ideas was not yet well developed. At all stages pupils used their good knowledge of material properties to select appropriate resources for manufacture. They were developing a good technical vocabulary to communicate their ideas effectively. Pupils were developing responsible attitudes towards the use of world resources and were aware of the impact of technology on lifestyles.

#### **4. How good is the curriculum?**

The structure of the curriculum was good. Teachers' long and short-term plans ensured that pupils experienced a broad and balanced curriculum. Programmes of work were of good or very good quality, and the school kept these under review. In order to ensure continuity of learning into the secondary school, pupils studied German in P5 and P6, and French in P7.

##### **English language**

The programme in English language was good overall. It gave attention to most aspects of listening, talking, reading and writing and ensured appropriate challenge for all pupils. In its review of the programme the school needed to provide pupils with more opportunities to talk in groups in order to develop further their discussion skills. The programme for writing was helping pupils to systematically develop their skills.

##### **Mathematics**

The programme in mathematics was good. It focused on the skills to be taught in almost all areas of mathematics, and indicated resources to be used. While resources for *problem-solving and enquiry* were included, the programme did not show how pupils' skills would develop through the school. The programme identified opportunities for using computers in mathematics, but this had not yet been implemented. A new programme in mathematics was being introduced through the school, and was currently in use in the early stages. This gave very good advice on direct teaching and was already leading to improved attainment and a faster pace of learning.

## **Technology**

The recently introduced programme for technology was good. It progressively developed pupils' understanding and use of the design process. At the early and middle stages it gave them very good opportunities to create and manufacture solutions to real life problems. It had not yet had a full impact on classes at the upper stages. The programme provided pupils at P2 with a very good insight into aspects of enterprise while making decorative tiles. Teachers used appropriate contexts to provide pupils with challenging and creative tasks. Good emphasis was given to the effect technology had on lifestyles through the ages.

## **Environmental studies**

The programme in environmental studies was very good overall. It provided broad and balanced coverage of all aspects of science, social subjects and technology. Topics were well matched to pupils' abilities and interests. Good attention was given to the systematic development of pupils' knowledge and skills from stage to stage.

## 5. How good is learning and teaching?

There were many strengths in learning and teaching. Teachers planned their lessons very well, and focused on the knowledge and skills to be taught. The quality of teaching was good. Teachers explained concepts and ideas well, and questioned pupils effectively to check their understanding. They needed to develop their use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a teaching tool. Pupils' learning experiences were good overall, and often very good, especially at the early stages in mathematics and technology. Pupils worked hard and enthusiastically on tasks which were well matched to their prior learning and abilities. Teachers assessed pupils' progress regularly. However, weaknesses in the use of assessment information meant that the pace of learning was too slow for some pupils in some lessons. Teachers' reports to parents on their children's progress were of good quality. They needed to show more clearly pupils' attainment in all aspects of the curriculum, and the next steps in their learning.

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

### **Care and welfare**

Staff offered good support for pupils' care and welfare. They knew their pupils well and were responsive to their needs. The school had effective procedures in place for dealing with incidents where pupils' health and safety might be at risk. In particular, considerable attention had been given to dealing effectively with incidences of bullying. While the school had clear procedures for responding to child protection issues, it needed to ensure that all staff were appropriately trained and regularly reminded of these procedures.

### **Personal and social development**

The school gave very good attention to pupils' personal and social development through a range of activities. These included classroom experiences, residential trips and work with the community. Older pupils took responsibility for the care and welfare of younger ones. The programme in health education paid appropriate attention to aspects of healthy living, including personal relationships and the misuse of drugs. Pupils' citizenship skills were being developed through involvement in the design of a new care residence to be built near the school.

### **Support for learning**

Pupils were very well supported in their learning by teachers and classroom assistants. The learning support teacher met regularly with the headteacher to review the allocation of additional support. In consultation with class teachers and classroom assistants, she carefully assessed pupils' needs and prepared appropriate programmes of work. She also offered helpful advice to class teachers and classroom

assistants and worked directly with individual pupils and groups where appropriate. She kept good assessment records for pupils receiving learning support. Pupils were making good progress in achieving specific targets set for them. The school provided effective support for pupils with special educational needs including well-structured individualised educational programmes (IEPs). The school and the education authority managed Records of Needs very effectively.

## **7. How well is the school managed?**

### **Overall management and leadership**

The overall quality of leadership was very good. The headteacher had shown a high degree of commitment, professional expertise and imagination in managing and continuously improving the school over a number of years. She had overseen improvements to programmes of work and the attainment of pupils. She had a clear vision of how to improve the education of pupils even further. She was receptive to new ideas from staff and the wider educational world. She had the support and respect of staff, pupils, parents and the community, and worked effectively with them. The headteacher's management duties included aspects of the community facilities.

The two senior teachers were coming to the end of their contract. They had given very good support to the headteacher, especially in aspects of self-evaluation and development planning. They had recently played a major role in the introduction of the new programme for mathematics.

The school's aims were detailed and appropriate, and had been shared with pupils and parents. A separate set of pupil aims had been drawn up in consultation with pupils, and these were used to guide the day-to-day work of the school. A full range of policies had been developed. These were of very good quality, and covered all aspects of the school's life.

### **Staff review and development**

The quality of staff review and development was good. Staff had undertaken a range of professional development opportunities, which had been very well linked to their needs and the needs of the school

development plan. All staff had had their work reviewed under the authority's programme for staff review in the previous session. The headteacher had conducted an informal follow-up review in the current session. The school now needed to fully implement annual professional reviews of staff in line with the education authority's plans for the new session.

### **Planning for improvement**

The quality of planning for improvement was good. Projects were generally very well chosen and implemented, and had led to improvements in pupils' attainment and learning. However, they did not clearly show how priorities for improvement had been chosen or how success would be measured.

### **Approaches to improving quality**

The school's approaches to improving quality were generally very good. All staff reflected on their practice and there was a whole-school climate of self-evaluation and a commitment to continuous improvement. The headteacher monitored teachers' work thoroughly, including the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. The results of this monitoring were shared with staff. Parents' views were collected through questionnaires and meetings with the School Board and the PTA. The pupil council was about to be re-established to further improve consultation with pupils. While attainment was monitored carefully, the school did not have systems in place to track the progress of individual pupils.

## **8. How well does the school perform overall?**

The provision in Dounby Primary School was highly valued by staff, pupils, parents and the community. The headteacher and her staff worked very hard as a team to meet pupils' needs. The school had an ethos where all pupils were included in all activities and cared for as individuals. Pupils responded by being polite, well-behaved and active learners. The commitment of the headteacher and staff to evaluating their work and securing improvements should result in the school's continued development.

### **Key strengths**

- \* The leadership of the headteacher.
- \* The quality of accommodation.
- \* The very good climate and relationships within the school.
- \* The support given to pupils in their learning.
- \* The partnership with parents and the wider community.
- \* The high attainment in English language.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should:

- \* ensure that all staff have appropriate training on child protection policy and procedures;
- \* continue to improve attainment in mathematics;
- \* continue to improve design skills in the upper stages of the school; and
- \* improve procedures to monitor and track pupils' progress.

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very good management of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report the school and the education authority will provide a progress report to parents and carers.

Brian Stewart  
HM Inspector  
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector  
28 October 2003

See Quality Indicator data below.

## **Appendix**

### **Indicators of quality**

***We judged the following to be very good***

- \* Climate and relationships
- \* Equality and fairness
- \* Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- \* Accommodation and facilities
- \* Staffing
- \* Provision of resources
- \* School management of finances
- \* Teachers' planning
- \* Learning support
- \* Implementation of legislation relating to SEN and disabilities
- \* Pastoral Care

- \* Self-evaluation
- \* Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- \* Leadership

**We judged the following to be *good***

- \* Expectations and promoting achievement
- \* Structure of the curriculum
- \* Courses and programmes
- \* The teaching process
- \* Pupils' learning experiences
- \* Meeting pupils' needs
- \* Assessment as part of teaching
- \* Reporting pupils' progress
- \* Staff review and development
- \* Planning for improvement

**We judged the following to be *fair***

- \* No aspects were found to be in this category

**We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory***

- \* No aspects were found to be in this category

**Quality of lessons observed**

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 18% of cases and good in 82%. There were no fair or unsatisfactory lessons.

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

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education & Recreational 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, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our web site: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:  
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