

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCHOOL REVIEW
SOUTH MORNINGSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

JUNE 2009

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

THE SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

South Morningside Primary School is a non-denominational primary school built in 1891 which serves the area of south Edinburgh. The catchment area comprises the community of Morningside, Greenbank and Comiston.

The current school roll is 630, including the nursery. There are 21 classes in the school. The pupil teacher ratio is 20:1.

Sixty seven district pupils enrolled in P1 in August 2008 and 20 district pupils enrolled elsewhere. There were also eight non-district pupils enrolled in P1.

The absence rate for 2007-2008 was eight half days per pupil. This compares with authority and national averages of 19. There were no formal exclusions during the period.

The pupil unit cost for 2008-2009 is £2857, compared to authority and national averages of £3391 and £3634 respectively. There is a Parent Forum and a Parent Council which incorporates the parent teacher association (PTA).

PUPIL ATTAINMENT

The school's current performance in relation to national 5-14 attainment is:

	2006	2007	2008
Reading	94%	94%	94%
Writing	87%	90%	90%
Mathematics	90%	95%	94%

REVIEW PROCEDURES

South Morningside Primary School was reviewed by a team from the Schools and Community Services of the Children and Families Department during March 2009. An experienced practitioner from another school in the city was also part of the review team. The review was based on the quality indicators in *How good is our school?* 3.

The review was based on two focus areas both of which included aspects of leadership and equalities:

- ✿ learning and teaching; and
- ✿ partnerships in learning.

The members of the review team made their evaluation on the basis of evidence provided by the school and their own observations.

In order to make their evaluation, the team consulted a number of school documents, including the improvement plan, interviewed samples of pupils, staff and parents, and observed learning and teaching. In total, 14 lessons were observed. A questionnaire was issued to a 20% sample of parents.

One hundred and eighteen questionnaires were sent to parents in the primary school and 61 were returned.

Sixty questionnaires were sent to parents in the nursery classes and 24 were returned.

Verbal questionnaires were carried out with sample groups of pupils.

PARENTS' / CARERS' VIEWS

Primary parents

- ✿ All parents felt that pupils were generally well behaved in the school. Almost all parents felt that activities at school were stimulating and challenging and that teachers treated their child fairly. Most parents felt that if they had a matter of concern or that their child was having difficulty the school would help and do something about it. Most parents also felt that the school was well led and that teachers knew their child as an individual. The majority of parents felt that they got regular, accurate and helpful information about their child's progress in school work and that the teachers were good at letting them know about their child's strengths and weaknesses. The majority were also satisfied

with the homework their child received. Most parents felt that the school did not have good accommodation.

Nursery parents

✿ All nursery parents said their children found activities stimulating and challenging and that they got regular, accurate and helpful information about their child's progress. All parents felt the children were well-behaved, the school was well led and had a good reputation in the community. They felt that staff knew their child as an individual and that their child was treated fairly by staff. Most parents felt that the school had explained the part they could play in their child's education and was good at explaining the work of the school to them.

Most of the parents felt that the arrangements for accommodating the nursery were logistically difficult in relation to cost, travel time and safety.

Pupils' views

- All pupils enjoyed being in school and had positive relationships with their teachers. Teachers always told them when they had done something well and they were encouraged to work to the best of their ability. Most pupils felt that teachers explained things clearly and that they were well supported in their learning. Pupils felt listened to and that the school was good at resolving any difficulties they might have. Most pupils thought all pupils were treated fairly although some pupils thought the behaviour of a few pupils could be better in the playground.

FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

1 LEARNING AND TEACHING

The review team considered the following quality indicators from 'How good is our school? 3' and *Child at the Centre 2*:

- 2.1 Learners' experiences
- 5.2 Teaching for effective learning
- 5.3 Meeting learning needs
- 5.4 Assessment for learning

Overall learning and teaching was considered to be very good.

Strengths in learning and teaching

Overall, the learning and teaching experiences which were shared with the review team were of a very good standard. Learners were motivated participants and were positively engaged in their learning. The staff were committed and hardworking, collaborating very well as a team to deliver high quality learning experiences for pupils.

Nursery children were actively involved in learning through play. They were confident and secure and had very good opportunities to exercise choice and be independent in their learning. Staff valued and encouraged children's responses and contributions across a wide range of experiences. They had a sound knowledge of individual children and planned high quality learning experiences to meet their needs. Staff shared their observations about children's development and progress and used these effectively to plan next steps in learning. They had recently introduced personal learning planning within the nursery and this was at an early stage of development.

The learning environments in nursery and primary were stimulating and well-presented, albeit that the teaching space in the school was generally very cramped. Classrooms were well-resourced and organised and offered

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

appropriate settings to enable pupils to encounter high quality learning experiences across the curriculum.

Planning for learning was consistent and enabled teachers to deliver a broad curriculum. It also ensured that the learning needs of pupils were well-met. Pupils worked in a variety of groupings which enabled them to progress at an appropriate pace. Teachers liaised very effectively to provide support to pupils with a wide range of abilities. Links with colleagues from other agencies also provided effective support for pupils' learning.

The learning process was also appropriately supported by a number of school documents e.g. the support for learning, the learning and teaching and the gifted and talented policies. The school made a significant contribution to the production of the cluster gifted and talented policy which provided pupils, parents and teachers with an opportunity to identify and develop a broad range of pupils' abilities across the school.

The school had a very strong focus on high attainment for all pupils. Tracking progress in attainment was a feature of all planning discussions between teachers and the senior management team (SMT). Teachers regularly revised their predictions about pupil attainment to reflect the pace of learning of each pupil. A significant number of pupils was presented for national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics ahead of nationally expected target dates. This was evidenced by very good national assessment levels and success in other academic pursuits. Diagnostic tests had also been used at agreed times in each pupil's school career to check progress and identify next steps in learning.

The school competed very successfully in mathematics challenges at a local and national level. This achievement required a significant

and sustained commitment and determination from pupils, specific staff members and parents and demonstrated the very good partnerships which were effectively developed and nurtured.

Pupils were encouraged to achieve to the best of their abilities and were given many opportunities to enhance their learning during school time, at lunchtime and after school. They were encouraged to become involved in activities such as the *Active Schools' Programme*, the *Web Weavers' Group*, many after school activities, excursions and residential camps. These reflected the very good opportunities for educational growth which were promoted by the school.

Pupils demonstrated confidence and their self-esteem was high. Staff valued and took account of pupils' views. This successfully developed pupils as successful, confident and responsible members of the school community. The pupil council was effective in bringing forward the views of pupils and the school's intention to further develop personal learning planning should enhance pupils' contributions to their own learning.

The interaction between the staff and children throughout the school was of a very high quality and effectively supported and extended learning. Teachers had embedded *Assessment is for Learning* strategies into their teaching approaches. Questioning was appropriate and pupils were given opportunities to check for understanding and use thinking time to reflect before responding. Teachers also effectively used verbal and visual signals to gauge whole class and group understanding. Pupils benefited from high quality verbal and written feedback from teachers. This enabled them to reflect appropriately on their next steps in learning.

Within some classrooms, the use of information communications technology (ICT) to support learning was particularly effective. This

included the use of interactive whiteboards and computers to support and enhance learning and the development of schools.

There was evidence of some very good evaluation of pupils' progress and identification of their next steps in learning. In some classes pupils effectively engaged in setting their learning targets and in self and peer evaluation. These particular teachers provided pupils with high quality feedback on their learning and encouraged them to assess the effectiveness of the learning process in their classrooms.

Areas for development in learning and teaching

Staff should further develop strategies to evaluate the learning outcomes for pupils, provide feedback to learners on their progress and identify next steps in learning. As part of this development, pupils' work should be shared with parents on a more regular basis.

The school should take forward its intention to develop personal learning planning. This should include a more consistent approach to greater pupil participation in the planning for and commitment to their learning.

The school should continue with its intention to further develop active learning and share best practice.

The school should build on the good use of ICT to support learning and staff should share best practice more widely.

2 PARTNERSHIPS IN LEARNING

The review team considered the following quality indicators from 'How good is our school? 3' and 'Child at the Centre 2':

- 5.7 Partnerships with learners and parents
- 8.1 Partnerships with the community, educational establishments and agencies
- 9.3 Developing people and partnerships

Overall, the partnerships in learning were very good.

Strengths in partnerships in learning

The school encouraged parents to establish effective partnerships in learning. Parents' views were regularly sought, both formally by questionnaire, more informally through regular newsletters as well as by email. Parents' evenings were very well attended and provided appropriate opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress. The headteacher also provided individual parents with the opportunity to discuss school matters at a surgery which he held once a month. Parents found curriculum evenings well organised, valuable and informative.

Buddying systems have been developed amongst classes and senior pupils enthusiastically and effectively supported the learning process for younger pupils. They also provided appropriate and welcomed support for the youngest pupils in the playground.

Very effective transition arrangements were in place to support children from home to nursery. Parents felt very welcomed and they were able to contribute and participate in a variety of ways. They found the parent consultations very valuable.

Staff had established very good procedures to ensure a smooth and positive transition to the P1 classes within the school. The parents of nursery class children emphasised the effective organisation of transition arrangements for children with additional support needs. They commented on the professionalism and commitment of the staff to enable this to be a positive experience. The school had established some effective links with local partner nurseries which have been developed over time.

The school had developed effective transition arrangements amongst teachers to facilitate

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

the movement of pupils from stage to stage. This ensured that the pace of learning was maintained appropriately. Commendably parents also received the learning aims for each year group at the beginning of the academic year. This enabled them to contribute positively to the learning process and outcomes for pupils throughout the year.

Good transition arrangements were in place for pupils transferring from P7–S1. A number of well-organised events, including an open afternoon, successfully introduced pupils and parents to the high school. This has led to S1 learning experiences that more effectively takes account of prior learning and teaching in the primary.

The school worked effectively with other professionals and parents to provide very good support for children with additional needs. The school was seen as very inclusive and staff were considered to be extremely receptive to the needs of children and families.

Individualised educational programmes were very well managed to ensure learning needs were met. Partnerships with therapists and other agencies were efficiently organised to promote effective outcomes for children.

At the early stages, parents were actively engaged within the classroom and valued opportunities to be part of school life. Indeed, the school had established very effective partnerships with a significant number of parents. Their expertise enhanced the curriculum and ably supported teachers in classroom and outdoor settings.

Very effective partnerships had been established between teachers and learning assistants (LAs) This had enabled the needs of individual pupils to be appropriately met. The LAs demonstrated high levels of ability and responsibility. They were well-informed through regular meetings with the

headteacher and felt that they were respected and valued by all those whom they supported.

The SMT provided effective support to staff and this enabled teaching approaches to be well-planned, delivered, assessed and evaluated. They systematically supported teachers within their classrooms and all were engaged in teaching whole classes or groups of pupils on a regular basis. The support provided to the nursery at weekly planning meetings provided valuable support to the nursery team. This ensured positive outcomes for the children and an effective link with the rest of the school.

Effective partnerships had also been established with other community representatives such as the community policeman and the school nurse. Both local ministers also visited regularly and supported the delivery of religious and moral education. The school valued the learning partnerships which had been established with contributors to the clubs run for pupils after school. Overall, they were of a very good standard and encouraged pupils to experience a variety of different learning approaches.

The school's website provided a helpful and informative platform for pupils, parents and the community to learn about the work of the school. A group of pupils ably facilitated its updating as well as contributing effectively to its upgrading. The school had worked hard to refine its use as an effective alternative to pupil post.

Areas for development in partnerships in learning

Staff in the early years should continue to develop and extend links with partner nurseries to ensure positive outcomes for children when they are transferring to P1.

The school should continue to work to find ways to ensure that the pace of and challenge in learning at S1 reflect the skills and abilities of all pupils from South Morningside.

The school should take forward its intention to revise and improve its approach to reporting to parents on pupils' progress, as outlined in its plans for the development of personal learning planning.

The school should continue to develop the use of its website to communicate effectively with parents. This requires to be balanced with the effectiveness of providing parents with information by pupil post.

SUMMARY

Commendable features

- ✿ There was a strong ethos of attainment and achievement.
- ✿ Pupils were confident, successful, well motivated, and responsible members of the school community.
- ✿ The staff were very committed to creating the best learning opportunities for pupils.
- ✿ The school had established a welcoming, inclusive and stimulating learning environment.
- ✿ The SMT led an effective team and had developed and nurtured very good partnerships which enhanced the learning experiences of pupils.

Areas for development by the school

- ✿ The school should take forward its intention to develop personal learning planning.
- ✿ The school should take forward its intention to develop further effective approaches to active learning.
- ✿ Staff in the early years should continue to develop and extend links with partner nurseries.

CONCLUSION

The school's performance in the focus areas of learning and teaching and partnerships in learning were both very good.

The school will be supported to meet the main recommendations in this report and a progress report will be requested the following session.

Jan Robertson
Senior Quality Improvement Officer
June 2009

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) use the following six-point scale in recognising the quality of provision in its inspection of schools. The City of Edinburgh Council has adopted this scale within the school review process and reference should be made to the following table when reading the report:

Excellent:	excellent
Very good:	major strengths
Good:	important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement
Adequate:	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak:	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory:	major weaknesses
Almost all:	90% plus
Most:	75% plus
Majority:	50% plus
Some:	15% plus
Few:	less than 15%

