

**Oxgangs Primary School  
City of Edinburgh Council  
10 October 2006**

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## 1. Background

Oxgangs Primary School was inspected in June 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 school serves an area of the south west of Edinburgh. At the time of the inspection the roll was 377, including 58 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

The nursery class was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' attainment in English language.
- The productive and positive school ethos and strong pastoral care for pupils.
- Well-behaved, polite, confident and courteous pupils.
- The quality and scope of the accommodation.

## 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 were positive about most aspects of school life. Most felt their children enjoyed being at school and all thought that the school had a good reputation in the community. They all appreciated individual interviews with teachers, and opportunities to hear about the work of the class. However, a few parents expressed

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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

the view that the written pupil progress reports were too impersonal. Pupils were proud of their school and talked with confidence about how much they enjoyed physical education, music and imaginative writing. Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about their responsibilities around the school. They appreciated the range of activities after school. Staff were very positive about the school and enjoyed working in it. They particularly commented on the supportive staff team and the pupils who were willing to learn and work hard. Parents, pupils and staff were all very pleased with the new accommodation and grounds.

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

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

Teachers provided pupils with an appropriate and well balanced curriculum. Across the school, curriculum flexibility time had been successfully used to improve pupils' skills in English language. The school had a strong commitment to the provision of regular good quality experiences in French at P6 and P7. Pupils' experiences in expressive arts were enhanced by a range of very good visiting teachers. Enterprise activities were established at some stages and a whole school approach was in preparation. Across the school, pupils did not experience a broad range of learning activities in health education on a regular basis. Pupils had very good access to information and communications technology (ICT) and used ICT effectively across the curriculum. This aspect was very well led by the excellent visiting specialist teacher of ICT. The early years curriculum did not offer pupils sufficient opportunities to learn through play. The quality of teaching was variable across the school but good overall. The visiting teacher of music was very effective in developing pupils' skills in singing and performing. There were examples of very effective teaching in a few classes at the lower and middle stages. This good practice now required to be put in place in all classes. Most teachers were well organised, planned their work effectively, gave clear explanations and made good use of questioning to promote pupils' thinking and check their understanding. They worked well with pupils in class, group and individual situations and used praise successfully to motivate them. Most teachers had begun to make effective use of a broader range of teaching approaches. This included sharing learning targets with pupils and providing helpful feedback on how to improve their work. These approaches were beginning to have an impact on pupils' work in English language.

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. Most pupils were diligent learners who worked hard to please their teachers. Almost all were very well behaved in class. They listened attentively to most teachers and produced work of a good quality. During some lessons, pupils worked very well together in pairs and small groups. In P5, pupils cooperated well in pairs to design and present information posters about endangered species. In P2, they regularly shared ideas for completing tasks and cooperated well together, for example in producing instructions for how to grow cress. Pupils in P7 worked well together to prepare an end-of-term performance. However, across the school, pupils had insufficient opportunity to work in groups. Too many tasks required pupils to work individually on written tasks. In a few lessons, the pace of learning was too slow and tasks were not sufficiently stimulating or challenging.

Across the school, pupils demonstrated self-confidence and positive attitudes towards others. For example, pupils were invited to nominate classmates for ‘responsible citizen’ badges. They willingly took on additional responsibilities, including acting as buddies with younger pupils and assisting with games in the playground. Pupils contributed effectively to the school’s decision making process through the pupil council. This had included making suggestions to improving the school grounds. Pupils regularly participated in a range of sporting events. They had achieved success in football, mini-tennis and skiing activities. The safe routes to school group had organised walking buses. Older pupils visited a local library to sing carols for the community. Pupils in P7 enjoyed an active and challenging residential outdoor education experience. Pupils developed an awareness of the needs of others by regularly raising funds for a wide range of local and international charities.

### **English language**

The overall attainment in English language was very good. Attainment in reading had remained high, being stable over the past three years. Pupils’ reading skills were developing well through ready access to attractive reading materials and their use of a variety of texts, including non-fiction and poetry. Attainment in writing had risen. Across the school most pupils had achieved appropriate levels or exceeded these in reading and writing. Pupils who were experiencing difficulty in classwork were making steady progress. Assessment information in pupils’ listening and talking was not maintained systematically across the school. Pupils could listen and talk effectively in groups about authors and books they had read. At P7, pupils had improved their talking skills through debating and individual talks. At all stages, pupils listened well and responded appropriately to teachers’ explanations, instructions and questions. Across the school, pupils wrote for a variety of purposes. A wide range of well written poetry was on display, including haiku, limericks, sonnets and emotions poems. In the early years, many pupils were writing well and at length. Through environmental studies, pupils wrote good quality letters and reports, including detailed descriptions of experiments and instructions. ICT was used well to enhance some of their work. Standards of handwriting, punctuation and presentation were variable.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. The majority of pupils had achieved national attainment levels appropriate to their stage in mathematics. There was no sustained trend in improving attainment in mathematics. However, in P2 most pupils had attained national attainment levels earlier than might be expected. Almost all pupils in P3 had achieved national attainment levels. Only two thirds of pupils in P7 had attained appropriate levels. A significant number of pupils from P4 to P7 were capable of achieving higher standards and learning at a faster pace. By P7, pupils had a good understanding of information handling and could collect, present and interpret data using a variety of graphs and charts. Across the school good use was made of ICT to present this data. In number work, most pupils at all stages were confident in written calculations and skills in mental calculation were good. By P7, pupils had a firm understanding of time, place value and money. They were less confident in using and understanding measurement, volume, weight and length. Most pupils could identify a range of shapes and discuss their properties. Pupils at the upper stages had a good understanding of the properties of angles. Pupils’ skills in identifying and using problem-solving strategies were not yet consistent across the school.

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

The quality of pastoral care was very good. Staff knew pupils very well as individuals and paid very good attention to their care and welfare. Almost all had a clear understanding of what they needed to do in relation to child protection. The school had a clear policy on anti-bullying and staff dealt effectively with any incidents of misbehaviour. Pupils could describe what they would do if they had any concerns or complaints. They were confident that all matters raised would be resolved. Staff increasingly promoted healthy living and the school had begun working towards a local authority health promoting school award. Pupils had a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and understood the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Commendably, fruit was available to all pupils on a daily basis through an initiative supported financially by parents. A range of active outwith school hours clubs were well attended by pupils across all stages.

Staff made good provision for pupils with differing abilities and most tasks were well matched to pupils' needs. However, more able pupils were not always sufficiently challenged. In early years classes, learning tasks were often too formal to match the needs of younger children. This had an impact on the behaviour of a few pupils. Staff made good use of effective procedures for identifying, assessing and recording the needs of pupils who needed extra support. Staff provided good support for pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning and prepared appropriate individualised educational programmes (IEPs). However, learning targets in IEPs were not always shared with pupils and parents. Learning assistants were deployed effectively to support pupils and made a strong contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils receiving additional support, including pupils for whom English was an additional language, were making good progress towards the appropriate learning targets set for them. There were well established arrangements in place to ensure that pupils transferred smoothly from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of the accommodation was very good. The new school had opened in 2005 and provided a very attractive learning environment both indoors and outdoors.</p> <p>Appropriate security arrangements were in place and access was very good for all users. However, a number of doors were very heavy for younger pupils and wheelchair users to open. Teachers had created attractive displays of pupils' work in class areas and throughout the school. The large gymnasium and outdoor Astroturf pitch were used regularly for physical education. A comfortable area was available for dining. Class areas were bright and welcoming and teachers used space within the rooms well. However, there was scope to increase the use of the open areas for play and active learning activities. A number of tutorial rooms provided very good space for small group work and meetings. Some of these rooms had limited ventilation and became uncomfortable to work in.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The overall climate of the school was very happy and industrious, and visitors were warmly welcomed. Staff and pupils had very good working relationships and staff morale was high. Pupils worked well in classes and were very well behaved and polite. Staff had high expectations of pupils' achievements across a wide range of activities. Pupils' successes were celebrated on display boards and at regular assemblies. However, expectations of pupil attainment and the quality and presentation of work were not consistently high enough across the school. Pupils were developing positive attitudes about diversity and an awareness of the needs of others, but this was not sufficiently well-developed across the school. Learning about fairness and equality, including race equality, was a feature of religious and moral education and personal and social development activities. Pupils had regular opportunities to take part in religious observance, well supported by the visiting chaplain.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnerships with parents, the local community and a range of support agencies had many strengths. The School Board, PTA and parents were actively engaged in running successful social and fundraising events. School concerts and events were well supported by the community. There was effective use of parents to support class activities and educational outings. The school provided useful regular newsletters detailing school events. Parents received good quality written information on their children's progress annually, and parent interview evenings were very well attended. Parents had recently been consulted about the school's approach to homework. The school and the commercial company contracted to manage the school's facilities were still developing an understanding of how to achieve effective partnership working.

## 7. Improving the school

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

Overall, Oxgangs Primary School provided a good quality of education for its pupils. The school was well-placed to continue improving. Although attainment was very good in English language and good in mathematics there was still room for further improvement. Pupils were developing a range of positive attitudes and skills across the curriculum. However, at times, abler pupils were insufficiently challenged in their work. Teachers were well prepared and organised and there were several examples of very effective teaching. All staff were committed to improving the quality of pupils' experiences and achievements. There was a strong climate of care, trust and respect across the school.

The quality of the overall leadership and management of the school was good. The headteacher had been in post for over 17 years and was very well respected by pupils, staff and the community. He knew all pupils and members of staff well and valued and recognised their talents. He had successfully established and sustained a warm and welcoming learning environment. His approachable manner and flexible management style was valued by all staff. The headteacher was well supported by the deputy headteacher and principal teacher. The management team demonstrated very good teaching. The headteacher was also very well supported by the effective business manager. There was scope to extend her responsibilities within the management team. The headteacher and deputy reviewed teachers' plans and gave staff encouraging, positive verbal feedback. They visited classes on both a formal and informal basis to review learning and teaching. They occasionally sampled pupils' work. Overall, these strategies were supportive to teachers but lacked rigour and did not always lead to improvement. The headteacher provided staff with verbal feedback on their work. However, there were no written records of recent visits to classes or evaluations of learning and teaching. The use of national assessments of pupils' attainment was not

effectively monitored or moderated. The school's approach to monitoring and tracking pupils' attainment was not systematic enough.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to ensure further improvement in the work of the school. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve attainment in mathematics in the middle and upper stages;
- improve approaches to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school; and
- ensure consistently high quality learning experiences in all classes.

### **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.

Susan R Duff  
HM Inspector

10 October 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	good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

<b>How well are pupils supported?</b>	
Pastoral care	very good
Meeting pupils' needs	good

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

<b>Improving the school</b>	
Leadership	good
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

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>• The school buildings and grounds were kept in good order.</li> <li>• The school had a good reputation in the local community.</li> <li>• Teachers set high standards for attainment.</li> <li>• Parents evenings were helpful and informative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give parents better information about the school's priorities for improvement.</li> <li>• Deal more effectively with inappropriate behaviour.</li> <li>• Make it clear to parents the standards of work expected of pupils.</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>• The school was an enjoyable place to be.</li> <li>• Teachers knew them well and explained things clearly.</li> <li>• Teachers expected them to work hard.</li> <li>• Pupils get on well together.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils could be improved and staff could deal with inappropriate behaviour more effectively.</li> <li>• Explain more clearly how to improve their work.</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>• Staff enjoyed working in the school and were pleased about almost all aspects of the school's work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support staff felt their training time could be used more effectively.</li> <li>• Increase opportunities to be involved in decision making.</li> </ul>

## **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 8426. 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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