



An Ethos of Achievement

**Whole school approaches
to improving performance
and celebrating success**

Edited by Jean Murray and Alison Closs

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Preface

The continuing debate on the nature of schooling and the true role of education in the modern world often centres on the significance of words such as 'ethos' and 'achievement'. However, while we may debate the precise meaning of either term, most of us would readily subscribe to the notion that a school with an 'Ethos of Achievement' is by definition a 'good school.'

The aim of this publication is to highlight the work of a number of schools which have achieved success and which celebrate achievement in its widest sense. This includes academic attainment, success in sports, participation in cultural activities and service to the community. In general, these are schools which encourage all pupils to fulfil their potential in every way. We hope that the schools which are featured here will be seen as representative of the very many schools in Scotland which are working hard to achieve success. We hope to encourage schools to consider the full range of achievement, covering all pupils, at all levels. We are sensitive to the issues involved in the publication of a number of case studies such as these and are keen to stress that the schools which are included are not presented as 'super' or 'the best' schools. Rather, we are interested in describing the process by which they improved on their previous performance, and how they see all the elements which make up a good school fitting into the 'big picture'.

The publication comprises thirteen case studies from primary, secondary and special schools. In all of these schools, improvement has been a gradual process, not always in a uniformly upward direction, due in part to the implementation of a range of policies and strategies. Each establishment has taken an individual approach to achievement, depending upon the individual circumstances pertaining to the school. However, there are several common threads which may be of interest:

- ◆ parents play a pro-active role in many of the schools, not only as members of the School Board or PTA, but also as members of school committees and as voluntary helpers in a wide range of activities, both within and outwith the school day;
- ◆ pupils are pro-active, taking part in pupil councils, regularly evaluating and commenting on their progress;
- ◆ the curriculum is delivered in a way that best supports individual pupils and allows for effective differentiation, so that all pupils are challenged and supported;
- ◆ the wider life of the school – extra curricular activities, cultural and recreational visits, community service and sports – is viewed as an integral part of a pupil's experience.

In all the schools featured there is a commitment to improvement, based on consistent, professional evaluation of their present position and future needs. School Development Plans reflect the view of the whole school community. Resources are targeted to address pupil needs. Staff development features prominently every session. There has usually been wide involvement in the planning process and there is a commitment to shared goals. In every case, the role of the Headteacher is crucial. Effective leadership has been central to the many pupil and staff achievements outlined here. Indeed, it may be a prerequisite of a 'good school', since vision and direction are properly the province of the Head. One of the distinguishing features of a good school may be that the Head is able to recognize, nurture and appreciate the ideas, talents and commitment of others, focusing them on achieving the aims of the school.

How do schools recognize and celebrate achievement? The recognition of pupil success is summed up by one school as, 'Any improvement on past performance, whether in academic, sporting or behavioural terms.' To celebrate achievement, schools employ a whole range of awards and praise strategies, but in all cases, the aim is to reward pupils across the whole spectrum of achievement.

Overall, there is no one route to an Ethos of Achievement. The secret is that there is no secret. Some schools raise achievement through a therapeutic approach to behaviour management, others use sports and drama to motivate and stimulate pupils, for others, the curriculum itself is central to their strategy. Whatever approach is taken, all have elements of inclusion, all are based on the individual pupil as a whole person and a belief that all pupils are capable of further positive development. We hope readers will find these case studies of interest and that schools may wish to consider how they too create, nurture and celebrate an Ethos of Achievement.

This publication is the latest in a series aimed at sharing good practice among schools and highlighting the importance of school ethos in promoting positive relationships and raising achievement. It is a companion publication to Promoting Positive Discipline, Sharing Good Practice: prevention and support concerning pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and Promoting Personal Safety and Child Protection in the Curriculum. These publications were distributed free to Scottish Schools 1998-1999.

The Editors,

Jean Murray
Alison Closs

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Pamela Munn, Director, Scottish Schools Ethos Network

Chapter 1

Dalmilling Primary School

School Facts



Dalmilling Primary School
Harthall
Ayr
KA8 0PD
South Ayrshire
Tel: 01292 264 738
Fax: 01292 261 154

Headteacher

Rev. William Milligan JP

Length of time in post

10 years

Type of school

5-11 Primary

Number of pupils

280 pupils, including 20 within the Extended Learning Facility

Staff numbers (FTE)

14

Location/catchment area

Dalmilling is a housing area in the north part of the large town of Ayr

Physical environment

The school building is 40 years old

% of pupils entitled to free meals

57%



Background

Our school is within the Priority Partnership Area of North Ayr and draws its pupils from the local community of Dalmilling. The PPA status given in 1997 recognised the very high level of multiple deprivation - within the 14% most deprived postal code areas in the country. A substantial proportion of children live with single parents. The school staffing level includes a deprivation weighting and we were among the first schools in South Ayrshire to be involved in the Early Intervention Programme.

4 members of teaching staff are appointed specifically to the newly developed Extended Learning Facility which caters for children with moderate learning difficulties. Children within the Facility are included within mainstream class and whole school activities according to their abilities, interests and needs.

There are substantial grassed play areas around the school which is sited on the highest part of the surrounding district. The school has, in the past, suffered from vandalism. One of our main aims over the last nine years has been to link community and school more closely. Among many positive outcomes from this has been a decrease in vandalism.

Our progress

Improvement, if it is to be real and sustained, is a gradual and not always uniformly upward process. Our school's history over the last nine years illustrates this clearly.

The school in the early 90s

Between 1991 and 1995 the school tried to develop a more positive ethos as a necessary step towards establishing a climate of achievement. Parents did not see the school as a welcoming place, a view partly resulting from their own schooling. Staff were seen as people who came into the area to do a job and then left at night, not identifying with the community and not 'partners with parents' in their children's education. We were a 'separate compartment' with many pupils themselves disaffected and engaged in vandalising the school at night.

Achievement overall was low as was the self-esteem of the pupils and, sadly, the expectations of some staff were not particularly high.

What did we do about it?

The school launched a series of initiatives aimed at raising self esteem and expectations to provide a springboard for achievement. Staff took part intensively in in-service. The 'deficit' model held by some staff, parents and others in the community was challenged – a painful process that risked alienation. Classroom methodology was debated and reassessed. Parents were actively encouraged to be partners with the school. A positive discipline policy was adopted and support, challenge and planning were placed at the heart of school development. The school was 'opened up' to community influences and engaged itself actively with the community. The three Ps – participation, praise and positivity – were, and still are, vigorously promoted. Some staff, perhaps inevitably, left during this period. This enabled the appointment of new staff who were aware from the beginning of our direction. School attendance began to improve, exclusions, playground incidents and bullying slowly diminished, more parents were around the school during the day and at parents' evenings. School and local community drew closer, with our concerts and productions particularly widely acclaimed. Other opinions needed to be tested now.

How were we doing?

In May 1995 a substantial school-led quality assurance survey involving all parents, staff and pupils (98% return rate) highlighted the turn-around.

Parents now described the school as, 'Caring, welcoming and encouraging to pupils' and as having, 'An excellent atmosphere, friendly and with a caring staff'.

Staff characterised the school by, 'Team work, caring and dedicated staff with a strong management team'.

Pupils liked best, 'The work; all the teachers; talking to the teachers; helping the teachers; topics; getting on with my friends; looking after the school.'

All this progress took four years to achieve and yet, really, we were just at the beginning of raising achievement and, along with that, self-esteem. In 1996, *How Good is Our*

School gave us more precise indicators. A whole staff survey highlighted deficiencies in pupils' attainments and, courageous admission, in some aspects of classroom learning and teaching. We had to tackle raising achievement and self-esteem directly.

What did we do then?

All our school development planning aimed at tackling these areas within the context of 5-14. More recently, the Target Setting agenda has sat relatively easily within our own overall development plan for the school.

The school had first to determine its philosophy of an ethos of achievement and set out its guiding principles clearly so that we could judge ourselves and be judged by others in relation to them. After robust debate three statements 'borrowed' from Brian Boyd at Jordanhill were agreed upon:

1. An ethos of achievement means support for all learners, strategies for empowering learners and for encouraging pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning.
2. There is a need to forge partnerships between home and school, between pupils and teachers and between pupil and pupil.
3. An ethos of achievement must involve all those with a stake in the child coming together to celebrate success.

After the principles we – staff, pupils and parents together – hammered out the key features of achievement:

- ◆ a critical awareness of educational and social values
- ◆ shared responsibility;
- ◆ self knowledge;
- ◆ a broad recognition of achievement – academic, social, spiritual and expressive;
- ◆ participation of staff, pupils and parents;
- ◆ an all-inclusive approach;
- ◆ a positive character.

Now we were ready to **go** although, in reality, we had been heading in the same direction for some time albeit with less clarity and not infrequent set-backs. However, we had decided early on, as the song has it, to 'accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative...'

The key strategies employed

We took an innovative approach to further develop the welcoming and purposeful **environment**. Internal walls were constructed, and others demolished, to make appropriate use of space and develop meeting areas for parents and others. Entrance vestibules were 'jazzed up', using parent, staff and pupil labour. A programme of refurbishment transformed the inside of the building – simple things like painting walls, introducing plants into the corridors and redistributing furniture. The main entrance was carpeted, curtained and the walls equipped with photographs on 'What's Happening in Dalmilling' boards. Contact with the local press publicised our efforts widely.

The **climate of confidence and optimism** was strengthened in a variety of ways. The school notepaper

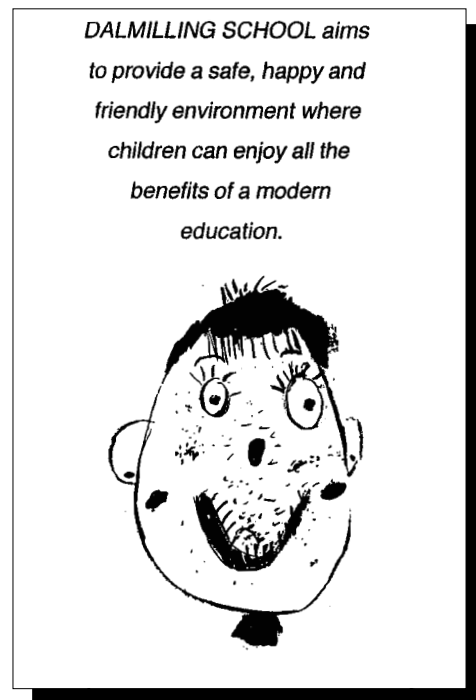


fig. 1

accentuated our positive attitude. A group was set up to market the school (fig. 1). The pupils developed simple rules for **conduct and behaviour** to apply to the whole school community – yes, staff too!

- ✓ We care for each other.
- ✓ We are polite to everyone.
- ✓ We always try our best.
- ✓ We look after our school.

The rules were incorporated into a school song, regularly sung at assemblies and acted upon daily around the school – doors are held open by pupils for staff and visitors, by staff for pupils and by pupils for pupils and generally accompanied by a pleasant greeting or an inquiring, 'Can I help you?' 'Good manners' became second nature.

We set about **recognising achievement** in ways that involved everyone. The Stars of The Month board recognises those pupils, and occasionally staff and parents, who have excelled in a particular area. They receive certificates (fig. 2 below and fig. 3 on next page) and are invited to tea with the SMT in the staff room.



fig. 2

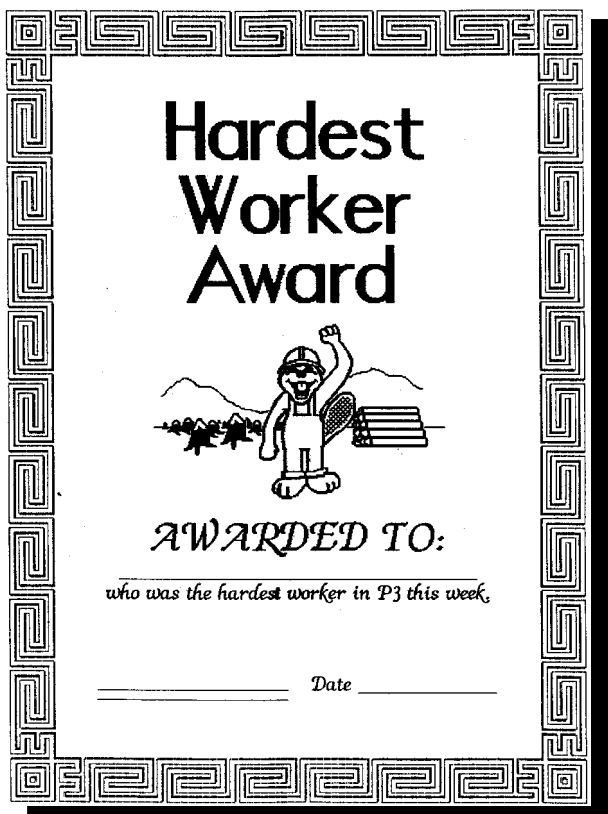


fig.3

The classrooms and corridors are cornucopias of pupils' work, amply demonstrating what we can do! Children are invited at weekly assemblies to talk about what they have achieved inside or outside school.

The 'Class of the Month' rejoices in a half day treat – a visit to the swimming pool or sports centre. Visiting theatres are invited in as a treat for the whole school when a particular venture has gone well. The whole school is characterised by praise for effort, positivity about what we can each strive to achieve and a 'can do' culture.

A **Pupil Council** was formed which debates issues affecting the pupils and the school. Old Folks' Clubs are invited in and treated to tea and concert days. The school Concert Party visits Churches, Women's Guilds and pensioners' clubs.

Regular fund-raising days help various causes. These result in staff, pupils and parents interacting naturally in what are truly fun days for the whole community.

Quantitative evidence of progress

It is not enough to feel that we are doing better, we have to be able to show some hard evidence!

Our parents have the greatest influence on their children's lives at home but they are vital to children's development in school too. North Ayr's Home-School Link Project help us develop parent partnerships. This can take many forms, all invaluable.

As just one example, the number of **parent helpers** in school over the last three sessions has grown from 5, to 20 and then to 30 currently, with an induction course being offered.

We keep an eye on '**results**'. The tracking of 5-14 results is a critical element in our overall approach, one that we share with parents.

Current **progress within 5-14** looks set to exceed targets for pupils achieving minimum expected 5-14 levels in 2001 (fig. 4).

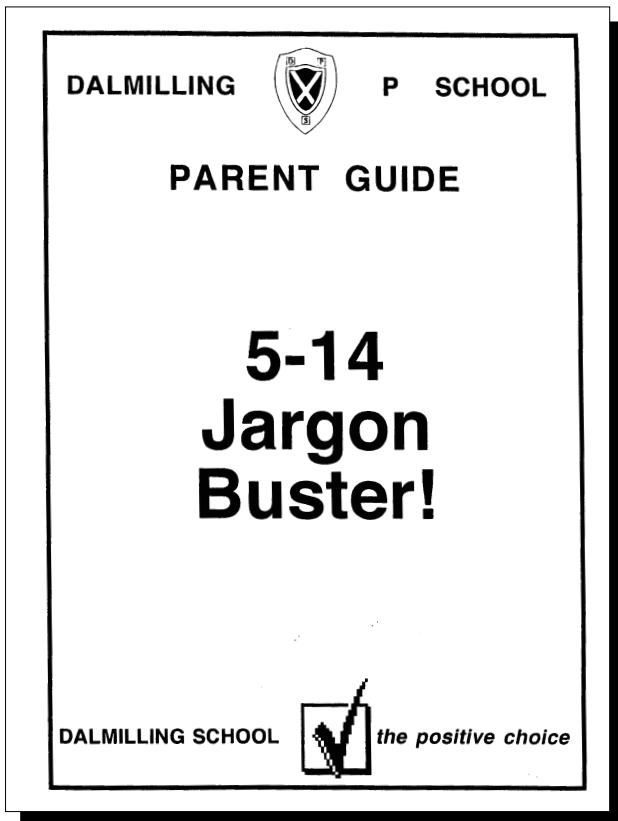
5-14 Targets	Reading	Writing	Maths
Starting value in June 1998	55%	36%	63%
Agreed final targets for June 2000	61%	41%	69%
Percentages at June 1999	59%	43%	71%

fig.4

In common with most other primary schools we register 0% unauthorised absences, but **authorised absence**, despite the widespread poor health in our area, had already fallen from 7.7% in June 1998 to 7.0% in June 1999 – 0.1% ahead of our 7.1% target for June 2001.

In the same time span **exclusions have fallen** from 12, to 8 and now to 6. We would much rather it was zero, of course, but we work with a small number of children with very disturbed and disturbing behaviour.

Five years ago the school offered only football as **sport** and then only to P7 boys. The school team was not very successful. Now, boys and girls – very successfully – participate in training and in the school team which has won the local Mackie Cup several times and the District Cup. They competed successfully in the Walker's Cup



Challenge at Ibrox. They have won the Strathclyde Police Operation Eagle Championship at Glasgow, played in Northern Ireland and hosted the Irish team for the return match. Our school janitor is the coach and very much 'in charge' of this success. Meantime, badminton, netball, aerobics and a Judo Club have been added to our sporting activities, with the Judo Club being run by one of our Nursery Nurses and her police sergeant husband, both black belts. The self-discipline involved in Judo has helped one youngster with a troubled past to sporting success – bronze medals in British Games – and to better behaviour.

Recognising the prevailing positive ethos in the school the local Council has entrusted to our care and development an **Extended Learning Facility** which caters for primary age children with Moderate Learning Difficulties who previously attended a special school. The 20 pupils are already being extended beyond what was thought to have been their capabilities in the past and the whole expanded community is greatly benefiting from this new development.

What now?

Our school cannot claim to be uniquely innovative but we have learned, often the hard way, what works for us. The development of an ethos of achievement is vital to the well-being of pupils in the broadest sense but we also have to play our part, however young our pupils, in the economic and social regeneration of our area. It is only by ensuring every child's best performance across the formal and informal curriculum that we can feel really confident in their future and that of the community. We help parents to support their children (fig. 5), offering factual information and advice, and appreciation for everything they do.

Our successes have been significant for us and have equipped the school with the determination to try, try and try again. Indeed, we think that the three key factors to our successes have been:

- ◆ wide involvement in planning processes,
- ◆ shared goals and
- ◆ a positive commitment to keep on trying.

Now we have to do our best to 'reach what is ahead'. We are well pleased with results so far yet we are conscious that, even nine years on, we still have some distance to travel.

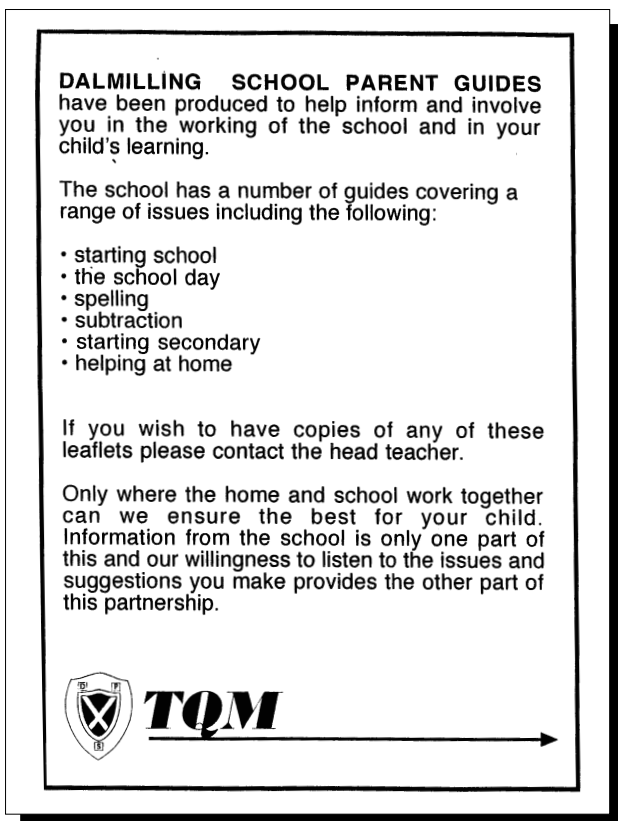


fig. 5

Chapter 2

Smithycroft Secondary School

School Facts



Smithycroft Secondary School
282 Smithycroft Road
G33 2QU
City of Glasgow
Tel: 0141 770 5595
Fax: 0141 770 4711

Headteacher

David Cumming

Length of time in post

2.5 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

700

Staff numbers (FTE)

69.5

Location/catchment area

North-East of Glasgow

Physical environment

Building is now 30 years old and due to be replaced

% of pupils entitled to free meals

56%



Background

Smithycroft Secondary serves a wide area in the north-east of Glasgow. Following school rationalization programmes in Glasgow over the last 12 years, it now has eight associated primaries, with an S1 intake of over 150.

The area served by the school is fairly homogeneous in socio-economic terms. 83% of pupils come from what were formerly Areas of Priority Treatment. These have now been included in the Greater Easterhouse Regeneration Initiative. Two years ago the school had the highest free meal entitlement in Scotland.

Fostering an ethos of achievement


Staff at Smithycroft are very aware that their pupils' achievements can be closely linked to their sense of self esteem and their self confidence. Since the arrival of Head Teacher David Cumming two and a half years ago, they have focused their efforts on a range of initiatives designed to motivate and support all their pupils.

In order to foster a sense of achievement, the school has a comprehensive **Merit Award Scheme** which aims to reward achievement in the broadest sense, increase pupils' self confidence and pride in their achievements. The criteria for the award of a merit card are:

- ◆ An excellent piece of class or homework relevant to the ability of the pupil.
- ◆ An outstanding contribution to a class activity.
- ◆ A significant improvement in a pupil's behaviour, attitude or effort (this should be judged over a minimum of two periods).
- ◆ A pupil consistently working to the best of their ability.
- ◆ An excellent contribution to a school activity or an activity outwith school which brings credit to the pupil and thereby the school.

Special Merit Cards are available for the 'school activity' section. Within the school these activities might include events such as the Maths Challenge, school shows, sports competitions, art workshops, running the tuckshop and enterprise group participation. Outwith the school, these might include positive press coverage of a story related to a pupil, helping to run a community group or taking part in events such as dance championships.

Pupils can also gain a Merit Award by attending supported study classes (fig. 1).

 Supported Study Merit Award (worth 3 awards when completed)		
<small>Fill in the details each time you go to a Supported Study Class and get the teacher taking the class to sign the appropriate box. When you have gone to 4 classes take this coupon to your register teacher who will credit you with 3 merit awards.</small>		
Class Attended	Date	Teacher's Signature
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
<input type="text"/> Name		<input type="text"/> Class




fig. 1

Pupils are encouraged to follow the school discipline policy, departments award stamps and stickers for improved performance, while at the annual Award Ceremonies, pupils receive certificates for achievement in a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural activities.

Pupils and staff have also worked on a 'Smithycroft Code' which asks pupils to

- ✓ Arrive on time
- ✓ Bring correct equipment
- ✓ Follow teachers' instructions
- ✓ Be polite and respectful
- ✓ Do your best
- ✓ Bring homework on time
- ✓ Take care of school property
- ✓ Follow the school dress code.

In addition to these policies the school has a range of strategies for improving ethos and attainment.

Action on attendance

When Joan Donnelly arrived at Smithycroft as Depute Head some three years ago, improving attendance was the main item in her remit.

'Attendance was irregular, even among the more able pupils. There was a culture of condoned absence – it was alright to come to school four days a week!'

Working with an outstanding attendance officer, the school has reduced the absence rate from 22% to 17% in just one year. Currently it is running at 15% this session. First of all Joan analysed the reasons for poor attendance and identified a number of approaches.

There was general agreement that the old system was not working. It depended heavily on letters going home, whereas now Guidance staff are completely proactive, using the phone or seeing parents as soon as absence occurs.

Members of staff, including the Depute, often accompany the attendance officer on home visits and get to know the parents.

The Depute goes to every meeting of the Attendance Council, with Guidance Staff also attending in rotation. Pupils are aware of the new system and are aware that they will be asked immediately about every absence. Staff are delighted with the improved attendance figures.

Joan's pro-active strategies also come to the fore at exam times. It is not unknown for her to go to pupils' homes to fetch them for an exam.

'I've waited in the living room while they get dressed!' laughs Joan, while her colleague, John Dickson, AHT Guidance, agrees that the prospect of an early morning visit from the Depute may spur a less than keen pupil to turn up for an exam!

In creating an ethos of achievement, attendance is seen as the foundation on which other initiatives depend for their success.

John Dickson agrees with his colleagues about the reasons for the improvement in their school's performance.

'Many of the ideas we have at Smithycroft can be found in other schools,' says John, *'but here we put them into action. We persevere until policy has become practice, and if something doesn't work well at first, we analyse the problems and try to do better next time.'*

This pro-active approach can also be seen in the increased attendance at Parents' Evenings. This had slipped to 40%, but is now 69% and rising. Guidance staff make sure parents know about forthcoming events and mention things like Supported Study, so that parents are aware of the support their children can access. A card describing the classes on offer is sent out with reports and classes run even if only one or two pupils can attend (fig. 2).

During the Easter holidays older pupils can attend revision classes. John notes that they prefer to study in school with teachers they know, rather than travel to revise at a local college, in an unfamiliar environment.


 S4 Supported Study <i>Classes restart Monday, 17.1.00</i>	
Monday	Biology Computing English Home Economics O.I.S. Physics
Tuesday	Art Geography History Mathematics Music Modern Studies
Wednesday	Chemistry French Mathematics Music
Thursday	English Economics Graphic Communication Music P.E. Studies Spanish
Friday	Craft & Design

fig. 2

Mentoring senior pupils

Staff at Smithycroft are keen to see their senior pupils do well, but they are aware that for many older pupils, sitting 5 Highers is very demanding, not so much academically, but in terms of confidence and self esteem. Last year, no pupil who started off sitting 5 Highers actually completed courses in all 5 subjects.

This year a group of 10 pupils, all taking 5 Highers in S5 have been targeted for support. For two periods a week, they are withdrawn from core time to concentrate on their Higher work. They negotiate a workplace with their teachers and use the time to do extra revision or homework. Graham Edgar, the teacher responsible for the project, is convinced it is worthwhile.

'The time I spend with pupils every week gives them the chance to organise their work in manageable 'chunks' so that they don't feel overwhelmed by it.'

Graham draws up a profile for each student, after interviewing them and discussing their work with their teachers. Pupils complete a questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the year, allowing Graham to monitor their progress (fig. 3).

Smithycroft Secondary School Pupil Profile			
Pupil Name : _____		Class : _____	Date : _____
Subject	Level	Information (+ve, -ve, tests, HW e.t.c.)	Supported Study
Core Time Study Period		Location / Topic	
Additional Information			

fig. 3

The pupils also have mentors – teachers who take an interest in them in smaller groups. They keep a 'Learning Log' where they note down certain things they have learned – not necessarily in school – and they use the logs to set themselves targets or build up glossaries.

'Knowing Mr. Edgar is keeping an eye on us', says one of the pupils, 'gives us a focus for our work so we make sure we've done what we said we'd do the week before!'

Another remarked *'I don't feel as overwhelmed by the five Highers as I remember my brother was.'*

Every effort is being made by the school to ensure that pupils have access to additional support from staff throughout the school. Parents are asked to support the pupils by giving praise for improvement and by taking an interest in their homework and general progress.

Early feedback suggests that the scheme is a success. So far, pupils are obtaining satisfactory results in their internal assessments and are coping well with the pressure of work.

'At one point I intended to drop Maths, but I spoke to Mr. Edgar, we sorted out the problem and got through it,' says one of the group.

Graham Edgar hopes to extend this scheme in the future in two ways:

- ◆ Pupils sitting three or four Highers plus some subjects at Intermediate level may also be included.
- ◆ S4 pupils are currently targeted after their Prelim. exams and are monitored by members of the Senior Management Team.

Identifying and supporting able pupils

As part of the school's strategy of raising attainment, staff have identified a group of able pupils in S1 who now benefit from additional support. As part of her SEN qualification, one of the Learning Support teachers studied the needs of the more able pupil. Using national guidelines, she identified those pupils in English and French who had reached level E in P7. This produced a group of around 30 from a year group of 140. The teacher then extended the search by asking Principal Teachers of other subjects to identify pupils who were especially able in their subject. This added another 16 to the total – now 46. It is interesting to note how recent research into multiple intelligences has been reflected in the final choice of pupils, opening up the field to pupils who may not have been doing so well in the traditional academic subjects such as English and Maths, but doing well in subjects such as Art, Music and Technology.

Staff were asked to volunteer to mentor groups of four pupils who were able in their subject or related subjects. The groups meet once a week at lunchtime or after school. Mary, the teacher involved, allocated the pupils to categories identified in the Able Pupils Module – able, more able and exceptionally able – and issued the results to staff. A typical group might look like the table on the right (fig. 4).

Pupil 1		
French	–	more able
Technology	–	exceptional
Maths	–	able
PE	–	able
Science	–	able
History	–	able
Pupil 2		
French	–	more able
Technology	–	exceptional
Modern Studies	–	able
Science	–	able
PE	–	able
English	–	more able
Pupil 3*		
French	–	exceptional
Technology	–	exceptional
Geography	–	exceptional
* This pupil is not performing well in National Tests. He has a history of behaviour problems. However, being in the group is helping him to settle and to improve throughout the school.		
Pupil 4		
French	–	more able
Modern Studies	–	exceptional
Science	–	able
Technical	–	exceptional
Home economics	–	more able
PE	–	able

fig. 4

Additional support strategies

This S1 group also go together to Supported Study, where members of the Learning Support Department give them every assistance.

As PT Learning Support at Smithycroft, Wilma Murphy sees her role as giving pupils 'self esteem, ambition and something to aim for.' 'A child has to feel comfortable.' says Wilma, 'Learning needs to be seen as non-threatening and achievable.'

Wilma uses a wide range of strategies to create optimum conditions for pupils. As well as fulfilling the traditional roles of the support teachers, Learning Support staff at Smithycroft organize and run a number of projects including:

- ◆ training senior pupils in counseling, communication skills, team building and listening skills during a week spent at Blairvadach Outdoor Centre;
- ◆ a Community Involvement Module for seniors;
- ◆ a Paired Reading scheme;
- ◆ a drop-in homework club;
- ◆ a Friday lunchtime games club for vulnerable pupils.

In addition, a Behaviour Support Group advises staff on strategies to support pupils with behavioural difficulties. The Joint Assessment Team takes a pro-active role, rather than dealing with pupils once serious difficulties have arisen.

Departmental Heads are also keen to maximise pupil potential. One Principal Teacher comments:

'I sincerely believe that conveying the message that pupils really can achieve more than they think they are capable of does work. Your class environment must really be positive and you need to praise even the smallest signs of progress. However, it also means that when pupils let themselves down through lack of effort, you have to talk to them about improving their attitude, relating this to how much faith you have in their abilities.'

Principal Teachers employ a range of strategies to raise pupils attainment: throughout S3 and S4, some departments focus homework and assessment on exam-type questions, believing that this approach teaches pupils to become more confident in examination techniques; feedback from regular assessment means that teaching methods and course materials are regularly adjusted to ensure maximum effectiveness; regular homework reinforces exam issues, develops skills and content and instills good work habits.

Next steps

As a consequence of these initiatives and the day to day efforts of pupils, parents and staff, the school has made marked progress in the last two years.

Pupils achieving 5+ Standard grades at 1-6 have increased in percentage terms from 56% in 1997 to 81% in 1999.

The percentage achieving 5+ S grades at 1-4 has risen from 28% to 52% in the same period.

Nevertheless David Cumming is clear that as well as maintaining progress in these areas, performance at Grades 1– 2 and at Higher has also to improve.

'The mentoring schemes in S1 and next year in S2 and S4, 5 and 6 will bear fruit over the next couple of years.' He is keen to emphasise, however, that these schemes and the other initiatives that are going on are only possible because, as he puts it *'The young people are on-side. They know that their well being and progress are what the school is all about. They are thriving in the culture of success which has come into being in what is really a remarkably short time.'*

Chapter 3

Coalsnaughton Primary School

School Facts



Coalsnaughton Primary School
Blackfaulds Street
Coalsnaughton
Clackmannanshire
FK13 6JU
Tel: 01259 750 204
Fax: 01259 751 766

Headteacher

Lena Horsburgh

Length of time in post

4 years

Type of school

5-11 Primary

Number of pupils

93

Staff numbers (FTE)

5

Location/catchment area

Former mining village

Physical environment

Old building, recently refurbished

% of pupils entitled to free meals

21%



Background

Coalsnaughton Primary School in Clackmannan serves the village of Coalsnaughton and the surrounding area of Devonside and Langower. Coalsnaughton was formerly a mining village but mining ceased almost 20 years ago and since then unemployment has risen, with no new major source of employment available. The school building was constructed in 1877, extended in 1974 and refurbished in 1988. The school population of just under a hundred has remained stable over the past few years. The school enjoys excellent relations with its local secondary, Alva Academy, which takes special measures to ensure that Coalsnaughton pupils settle in to a school so much larger than their own. The school population has twice as many boys as girls. The predominance of boys means that school structures and policies have begun to take into account recent research which indicates that boys may benefit from specific classroom and playground strategies. Many boys prefer a competitive element in games, sports and curricular methodology and so specific input on these issues is now a feature of the school's staff development and training programme.

The school as a focus for the village

In the summer of 1996, a group of pupils from the school was involved in a number of incidents during the school holidays. When school resumed in August, a number of parents visited the school to complain about the situation to the new Headteacher. The head realised that it would be in the best interests of the children to use the issues arising from the discussions to build a more positive relationship with the parents and the wider community. The long term results of their discussions have led to a complete change in the community's perception of the school. The positive view of the school now held by parents and the wider community also reflects an improvement in the school ethos and in pupil performance. These have taken place in tandem with the community projects undertaken as a result of the parents' initial visit to the school. The Headteacher realised that the school could not build an ethos of achievement in isolation. She needed the support of parents and the community since many aspects of pupils' underachievement could be linked to difficult home circumstances. Village life in Coalsnaughton had almost ceased to exist and many traditional facilities such as banks, the library and the church were no longer available. The village hall, which at one time had been the centre of village life, had fallen into disrepair. To begin to tackle the problems an Action Group was set up comprising a number of agencies and individuals, including:

- ◆ The local councillor
- ◆ The police
- ◆ Members of the local church
- ◆ The health visitor
- ◆ The social work department
- ◆ An AHT from the associated secondary school
- ◆ The educational psychologist.
- ◆ The head of LALIC – Learning for Adults in Clackmannan

The multi-agency group met once a term. It was decided to make the refurbishment of the village hall their first priority. This project was the beginning of a new relationship between the school and the community where positive links and an atmosphere of interdependence and co-operation are now the norm.

First steps

There was no recent history of parents playing a full part in the life of the school. To encourage them to come into the building and to provide new activities for the village, the school hosted leisure classes, including aromatherapy and relaxation. This allowed parents to come together as a community and to become familiar with the school as a welcoming and supportive environment. As part of the village hall initiative, parents worked with the pupils in school time to make items such as key rings, cross stitch pictures and Christmas decorations which were then sold

within and outwith the school to raise funds for the hall project. Parents also organised a lunch club for older villagers, who enjoyed getting to know the staff and children when they visited the school at lunchtime. Pupils decided to hold their own fund raising days in the school. They held bring and buy sales, beetle drives and other community activities. Pupils enjoyed these experiences, which also helped to promote a sense of citizenship among the children.

Aspects of the 5 – 14 environmental studies curriculum were addressed by pupil involvement in the new hall project. For example, 2 pupils sat on the Hall Committee and helped to raise £10,000 towards the cost of refurbishment while other pupils conducted surveys and investigations throughout the village as to the potential use of the hall.

Raising achievement in the early years

The school is part of Clackmannan's Early Learning Programme. A wide range of strategies is used to raise achievement, including a **synthetic phonics** approach, developed in partnership with Clackmannan Education Authority and St Andrew's University. This is a highly structured programme of spelling and reading, based on teaching 4 letters a week. The letters taught are then blended to form words as soon as possible. Pupils also focus on the place of the letter in the word and how this can affect its pronunciation. The project takes a multi-sensory approach which takes account of different learning styles – visual, auditory and kinesthetic – and pupils use glove puppets and other strategies such as tapping out sounds and magnetic boards to reinforce what they have learned. All staff involved were trained in the new methodology and in the content of what was to be taught. Open evaluation at each stage ensured that the staff in the school retained a sense of ownership of the project and the original scheme was modified to take account of their findings.

As they gradually acquire reading skills, pupils receive encouragement in the form of awards and certificates (fig. 1).



fig. 1

Focus on methodology

In addition to the Early Learning project, staff implement a range of strategies to promote sound and effective learning.

Planning and Structure

Teachers now use more **whole class teaching** whereas previously most lessons were delivered in groups. With composite classes staff were finding that they had too many groups and they had literally no time to teach. Now, when group work is appropriate, pupils are divided into no more than 3 groups in each class. Staff focus their forward plans on what the children will learn rather than on the content of what they will teach. Each morning pupils are given the 'big picture' of where their learning for that day fits into the overall context of their studies. At the end of each day they are asked to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 5, how much they feel they have learned. Previously staff found that pupils were too embarrassed to admit that they had not understood all or part of a lesson. Now the teacher can re-teach those parts of the curriculum where pupil understanding has been low on the scale.

Questioning Techniques

When pupils are asked a **question**, then respond, the teacher no longer repeats the answer. In the past pupils did not pay attention when another pupil answered since they knew the teacher would repeat the answer. Now pupils are more attentive in class and more willing to listen to each other.

Teachers also allow '**processing time**' - giving pupils longer to respond to a question without further prompting – to allow pupils to reflect and respond, rather than the teacher supplying the answer before the pupil had adequate time to consider the question and frame a response.

More use is made of **open ended questions**, and pupils are encouraged to ask their own questions both of the teacher and their fellow pupils. There is, therefore, more active and less passive learning.

By posing questions to individual pupils at different levels staff can **differentiate by question** and response, so that pupils have a sense of being included in the whole class, rather than split into separate groups, which may have been de-motivating for some.

Other Strategies

Recently the school held a P5/P6 **Writers' Workshop** where a visiting specialist worked with different groups in 40 minute sessions over 5 days. Senior citizens were invited into the school to talk about their experiences then the pupils produced articles based on what they had heard. Staff were interested to discover that certain pupils, who were underachieving in some of the formal aspects of 5 – 14 Writing such as spelling and punctuation, were highly commended for creativity and content. The school is now considering how to take forward the promotion of creativity in everyday classroom work on writing.

The school has **3 Individual Learning Systems** which are used to assist individual pupils in aspects of basic English and Maths.

To improve **spelling** each pupil has a number of words to learn each evening with a test on Fridays. Pupils work through the levels on an individual basis and parents are asked to help reinforce this work at home.

Playground strategies

In common with many schools, Coalsnaughton has found that behaviour in the playground can spill over into the classroom. The school extended its award system to cover playground behaviour and now certificates can be awarded for good behaviour and consideration for others at breaktimes and lunch (fig. 2).

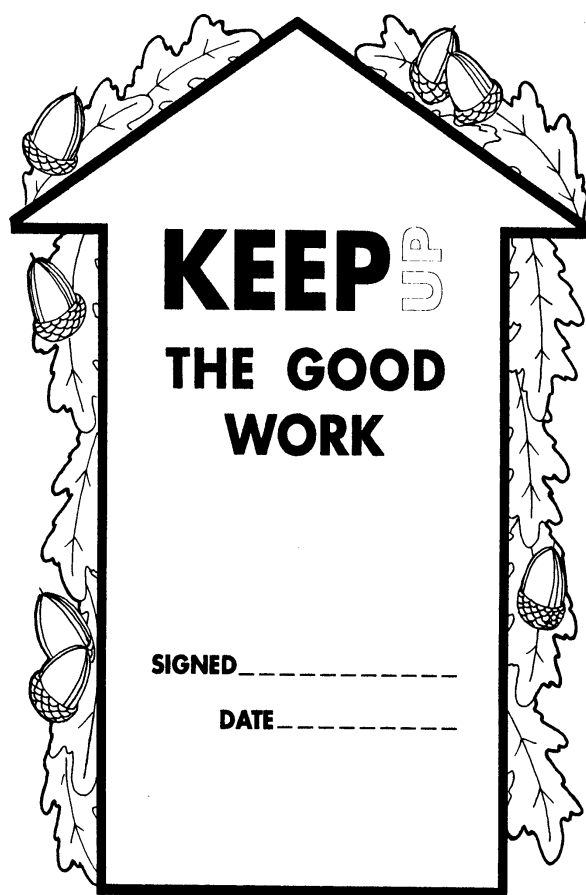


fig. 2

These certificates are awarded every term and 75% of the children often receive a Gold Certificate, awarded to pupils with no more than two black marks for playground misbehaviour. At the end of the year pupils who hold all gold certificates are rewarded by being allowed to use an assault course specially set up for the occasion. Pupils who hold silver and bronze as well as gold certificates may also use the course but for a shorter period of time.

Community Involvement

The Burns Club of Coalsnaughton has always supported the school. Pupils recite Burns' poetry and a cup is presented to the winner. The school has also traditionally hosted a Burns' Lunch but this year it has been extended to a Burns' Supper organized by Primary 7 pupils and enthusiastically supported by parents.

A local business donated £10,000 to the school for the development of a new school garden, designed to look like an amphitheatre. It is due for completion in June 2000 when the school hopes to have Scottish Opera and Theatre about Glasgow (TAG) work with pupils on an opening event.

Each class organizes a coffee morning for the local community. These take place four times a year and allow pupils to demonstrate their social and catering skills to admiring parents and friends.

Although the first attempt to secure lottery funding for the hall was unsuccessful, an award of £300,000 was secured on the second attempt, and the hall has now been successfully refurbished.

Parental involvement

Parents now help the school by running the library, which has been refurbished. As there is no local public library in Coalsnaughton the school library now has an adult section, which, again, helps to encourage parents to visit the school.

When it proved difficult to attract parents to workshop sessions the Headteacher decided instead to film the pupils in class and then to invite the parents to watch the

Parents' Night Statistics			
	Nov 1997	Nov 1998	Nov 1999
Primary 1/2	91%	100%	100%
Primary 3/4	92%	96%	100%
Primary 5/6	91%	89%	90%
Primary 6/7	98%	89%	100%
Overall turn out	89%	94%	98%
Number of families attended	65 =	57 =	66 =
	89%	95%	98%

fig. 3

video. This proved popular and allowed the school to run the workshops with the parents after the screening. Over 90% of parents now attend Parent/Teacher interview evenings (fig. 3). Those who cannot attend often phone to make appointments to see the teacher. During this time the Headteacher takes the class to allow the teacher to speak with the parent.

A crèche is provided for parents who wish to attend workshops in the school at 3pm.

Parents can now discuss problems openly with the school and are involved in awarding their children stickers and prizes when their work or behaviour at school shows an improvement.

Results

Over the past two years, there has been a marked increase in the percentage of pupils attaining or exceeding the minimum 5 – 14 levels for their age (fig. 4).

	1998	1999
READING		
P3 pupils attaining or exceeding level A	56%	77%
P4 pupils attaining or exceeding level B	31%	69%
P6 pupils attaining or exceeding level C	17%	43%
P7 pupils attaining or exceeding level D	22%	17%
MATHS		
P3 pupils attaining or exceeding level A	94%	100%
P4 pupils attaining or exceeding level B	46%	93%
P6 pupils attaining or exceeding level C	50%	64%
P7 pupils attaining or exceeding level D	22%	0%
WRITING		
P3 pupils attaining or exceeding level A	44%	38%
P4 pupils attaining or exceeding level B	8%	47%
P6 pupils attaining or exceeding level C	0%	29%
P7 pupils attaining or exceeding level D	11%	0%

fig. 4

Celebrating success

The school has employed a range of strategies to celebrate success. The Headteacher finds that pupils respond well to new challenges and reward systems. To date the following have been used over the past few years:

- ◆ A 'Best Class' award, with a cup being presented at Assembly each week. The class which received the cup most often, were rewarded with a summer treat of their choice.
- ◆ At lunchtime, pupils used to receive marbles for the best cleared table. Now they receive stamps which they save towards a voucher for the tuckshop.
- ◆ Star writer award.
- ◆ Star pupil award.
- ◆ A 'Birthday Box' from which pupils receive a small gift such as a pencil, ruler, rubber etc. This also ensures that everyone receives public acclaim at least once a year.
- ◆ Sports medals, awarded to those who take part in athletics and games of mini-rugby and cricket organised by sports development officers who visit the school.

Looking to the future

Coalsnaughton Primary's approach to the promotion of an Ethos of Achievement has focused on two separate but inter-dependent areas of school life. The **ethos of the school** has been improved, together with its standing in the community. **Pupil attainment** has risen, following the implementation of new teaching methods and a new approach to differentiation. The pupils involved in the Early Learning initiative are now in Primary 3 and the Headteacher is keen to evaluate whether the success of the earlier years can be continued as the pupils mature and move up the school. Work on emotional intelligence is just beginning, with staff seeing this as a natural extension of their strategies for accelerated learning.

We are only at the beginning of a long journey, but already there are signs of improvement. As we all know, it is not difficult to start new initiatives, but their maintenance and continued development require a great deal of commitment from everyone involved.

Lena Horsburgh - Headteacher

Chapter 4

Firrhill High School

School Facts



Firrhill High School
Firrhill
Edinburgh
EH14 1DP
Tel: 0131 441 4501
Fax: 0131 441 1036

Headteacher

Pat Cairns

Length of time in post

6 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

940

Staff numbers (FTE)

70

Location/catchment area

South West Edinburgh

Physical environment

Built 1960 – undergoing £4 million refurbishment

% of pupils entitled to free meals

8%



Background

Firrhill High School is a non-denominational secondary serving South West Edinburgh. The school has grown in numbers and attainment over the past six years. In August 1993 the school roll was 635, increasing to 901 in August 1999 when the school recruited 88% of its catchment area and attracted 12% placing requests. It draws the majority of its pupils from Bonaly, Colinton, Comiston, Hunter's Tryst, Longstone and Oxfangs primary schools. Redford and Dreghorn Barracks form part of its catchment area and this leads to considerable student movement due to relocation of regiments. The school has recently undergone a major refurbishment designed to provide improved, integrated accommodation for a roll of 950. Since the school roll is expected to rise above that figure to 1150, a second phase will be required and has been included in the Authority's capital programme.

Raising Attainment

Since the arrival of the Headteacher in 1993, staff have worked cooperatively to implement a 'rolling programme' designed to maximize the potential of every student. The Head is convinced that this structured, long term approach has paid dividends.

'We started 5 years ago with a support base open half the week and staffed by volunteers. Each year since we have expanded and developed the range of student support offered principally to S1-S2 students.'

Headteacher comment

The Headteacher is aware that too many changes can destabilize any school if they are not seen as part of an integrated approach. Pat regularly updates staff, not just on new initiatives, but on the progress they have made to date, reminding them of all the strategies they have put in place over the past five or six years. Her most recent list included:

- ✓ Support base staffed full time
- ✓ Reading Recovery Programme S1 & S2
- ✓ Success Maker – Integrated Learning System – Maths & English
- ✓ S6 subject mentors
- ✓ S6 Paired Reading daily with S1-S2
- ✓ S6 Buddy system with S1 registration and PSE
- ✓ P7 Transition Summer School

In addition to the above, the school has implemented a number of other strategies designed to raise attainment and increase pupil support at all levels.

First level guidance (FLG)

First level guidance was introduced into Firrhill some three years ago in response to a growing awareness of how important it is for all pupils to have frequent and regular contact with a teacher who can take a special interest in their progress. In addition to their daily registration duties, register teachers of S1 and S2 now also take their pupils for PSE once a week. In order to ensure the success of the initiative, Guidance and Senior Management staff consulted all those likely to be involved and also researched the progress of First Level Guidance in other schools. They found that the commitment to First Level Guidance had declined in some schools visited. Reasons for this included some or all of the following:

Training – staff felt unprepared to deliver PSE, as the methodology varied from their usual classroom practice. They also felt unprepared to deliver more specialist topics.

Resources – sharing resources kept in a central location was problematic.

Support – staff felt that the level of support provided initially did not continue throughout the session.

Firrhill was committed to making FLG a success and took the following steps in response to staff needs:

- ✓ Tutor Groups have a maximum size of 20 pupils.
- ✓ PSE Tutors receive training and hands-on experience of PSE Methodology.
- ✓ PSE Tutors receive individual lesson plans, support notes and sample worksheets for each lesson.
- ✓ Specialist topics are delivered by outside agencies.
- ✓ PSE Tutors are provided with all the resources required to deliver the programme at the beginning of the session.
- ✓ Guidance Staff double bank with PSE Tutors for the initial 8 weeks of the programme. Thereafter they are available if further support is required.
- ✓ An opportunity to meet with Guidance staff to discuss both the PSE Programme and individual pupils is built into the PAT programme.

Once this structure was in place, staff were asked to volunteer to become S1 or S2 Group Tutors. First Level Guidance is now in its 3rd year of implementation and both staff and pupils are enthusiastic about the enhanced pupil support that it provides.

Attendance

Isabel Ford, an Assistant Head at Firrhill, describes attendance as 'key and crucial.' The staff have worked very hard to improve attendance and have seen their efforts rewarded with a drop in the absence rate from 10% to 8% and have a target of 6% for this session. Everyone agreed that the old system was not effective. Pupils used to register at the beginning of the school day, but now registration takes place at the end of period 2. Pupils have to be in a teaching class at 8.30 when school starts and they are much less likely to be late!

Latecoming is now dealt with by the SMT – a prospect most pupils do not relish, as it can lead to detention after school on a Tuesday if their latecoming is frequent and no improvement is made. There is also a system of period by period attendance checks, which helps to prevent period truancy.

'We have all had to work hard to improve the system. It was made a priority for a member of the office staff and we have greatly reduced the discrepancies in returns.'

Specific Support Programme

Home study

The school has very well developed policies and procedures for home study. The importance of homework is clearly identified in the school prospectus and a separate policy document provides greater detail. A home study guide for parents has also been prepared and provides a summary of the policy in an easy to use format. In addition, three booklets covering the stages S1/S2, S3/S4 and S5/S6 give excellent information to parents on home study for each subject department. This includes guidance on the amount of homework to be expected; the notice that will be given; the feedback that pupils can expect and the nature and purpose of the home study activity. Through an initiative of the School Board, every pupil has been provided with a student planner which not only serves the purposes of a homework diary but provides a wide range of other information. This includes: the school values and mission statement; the code of conduct and dress code; the school day and session dates; a place for recording personal targets, positive referrals and assessments; and a revision section providing curricular summaries. It not only allows the recording of home study tasks, but has a place for parents to sign and for teachers and parents to make comment.

Extended pupil support

Firrhill High school is keen to ensure that all kinds of support are in place for pupils. The **Curriculum Support Base** is a whole school resource which operates as an adjunct to Guidance and Learning Support. It offers small group provision for pupils with physical/sensory/emotional/behavioural and learning needs. Pupils self-refer or are referred by staff. Weekly referral team meetings are attended by the Extended Pupil Support Team (PT EPS, PT LSSN, PTs Guidance, AHT and Educational Psychologist).

The Able Pupils Group

A number of staff have been trained to support able pupils and now run an **Able Pupils Group**. Pupils in the group from S2 are taking part in a Peer Mediation scheme (fig. 1). Pupils who join the scheme study ways to resolve conflict without resorting to violence. In schools throughout the world, such projects have led to a decrease in bullying and anti-social behaviour. Those pupils who have received training benefit throughout their lives from the skills and techniques they acquired.

The pupils were chosen via an interesting peer recommendation scheme, whereby pupils in each class were asked to identify those pupils in their class with high social and interpersonal skills. They were asked, for example,

- ◆ Who thinks of the most unusual ideas?
- ◆ Who talks the most sense?
- ◆ Who would be the best organiser of a school concert?
- ◆ Who is the most sensitive or caring in the class?
- ◆ Who in the class would you most like to be like?
- ◆ Who would you really like to have at a party?
- ◆ Who would you go to for support if someone close to you was very ill?
- ◆ Who would make the best sports captain?

Staff took this approach to ensure that the Peer Mediation Group was truly representative of the pupil cohort. These pupils, some 30 in number, are studying Conflict Resolution through drama workshops. They will attend once a week for 11 weeks, then it is hoped that they will form part of the Peer Mediation Team, helping to resolve conflicts and mediate in disputes. Part of their training includes advice on when to pass on difficult issues to appropriate staff.

Support from Senior Pupils

Pupils in the present sixth year at Firrhill were the first group to benefit from the comprehensive agenda designed to raise attainment and to extend the range of pupil support. Older students now help younger pupils in the Paired Reading Scheme, work in their favourite subjects with younger classes, and provide support in S1 registration or PSE classes.

An effective S1/S6 mentoring programme is co-ordinated by the ST LSSN. S6 pupils are introduced to the programme in June and invited to apply. Their commitment is two periods per week. Practical advice is offered to volunteers and subject teachers and careful monitoring and support is provided by the senior teacher LSSN. Everyone involved takes part in an evaluation of the programme and recognition of the senior pupils' participation as a mentor is included in the pupils' Records of Achievement.

WHY? Peer mediation is acknowledged as a useful way of expanding students' interpersonal skills, enhancing self-confidence and building a mature and constructive attitude to conflict situations.

It has been an integral part of curriculum enhancement projects throughout the world and will provide an excellent basis on which to build Firrhill's positive discipline procedures in the future.

HOW WAS I CHOSEN? You are one of 6 people from your tutor group who were chosen by the others in the group as a result of the peer recommendation exercise which you did in PSE a couple of weeks ago.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? Hopefully the project will be an interesting change from normal school work. Drinks and snacks will be provided and the theme, although a serious one, will be dealt with in a fun way, with plenty of drama, games and the chance to make a short film.



What is mediation?

It is using a neutral person to help others to resolve their disputes. It is **not** about deciding who is right or wrong or blaming the other person.

It is about :-

- allowing the people who are in conflict to describe the problem from their point of view.
- hearing the feelings and needs of other people
- agreeing a course of action to solve the problem
- making sure everyone wins

Why teach it in schools?

- to show young people that they have the special skills needed to be mediators.
- to develop these skills in pupils to help them deal with conflict.
- to raise the young peoples' self esteem.
- to give young people alternatives to using disruption or violence in conflict situations
- to build understanding and awareness of others
- to create a culture of co-operation.

What will the Firrhill project be doing?

- doing team building and confidence building exercises
- teaching negotiating skills
- making a short film with a team of professional film makers

fig. 1

Specific curricular support

In Session 1996-97 the school implemented a reading recovery programme in S1, targeting the poorest readers. These pupils are now in S4 and Sheona Hall, PT LSSN is convinced that the scheme has been worthwhile.

Members of the English department assist in the scheme and find that it has increased their expertise in working with poor readers.

The department also uses an Individualised Learning Scheme to improve pupils' skills in spelling and maths. Teachers from the Maths department are delivering the programme within the LSSN department. Pupils work through the computer package which provides individual work and instant feedback. Pupil targets are set and progress recorded in graph form.

As with English, members of the Maths Department feel that they benefit from their involvement in the programme by acquiring additional expertise in working with pupils who need support in specific areas of the Maths Curriculum.

Education business partnership

During Session 1997-98 the school decided to re-design the Education for Work arrangements. A strategic group of key staff and business personnel was set up to devise a progressive S1-S6 programme. Key to this initiative was a determination not to seek funding but to work in genuine partnership with the Business Community to enhance student core skills and to devise opportunities for the students to demonstrate the practical relevance of subject learning.

Some 40 companies now work with staff and students to provide quality experiences back in the classroom. This will ensure a contemporary and relevant introduction to the skills and competences required by the business community in its future workforce.

This session, through Edinburgh Compact, 10 of the S3 and S4 students were offered a mentor from the business community. The guidance staff nominated students whom they felt would benefit from the opportunity to meet regularly with a sympathetic adult who would give objective advice and support over an extended period of time.

Firrhill High School today

Firrhill has become a successful school, due in part to the fact that staff work collaboratively to a consistent and practical plan for overall school improvement.

Appropriate resources are always provided and the staff work tirelessly to ensure that improvements have every chance of success. All initiatives are consistently monitored and evaluated and staff are keen to persevere until new systems and approaches are satisfactorily integrated into the life and work of the school.

Last session various indicators suggested that the process of continuous improvement has indeed produced results:

- ◆ The school achieved twice the national average for 5+ awards at Higher Grade and an eight percent increase in numbers achieving 3+ awards.
- ◆ Destination analyses show that 52% pupils are moving on to Higher and Further Education and the remainder going directly into employment or training.
- ◆ Staying on rates from S4 to S5 are up from 55% in 1993 to 75% in 1999.

Firrhill High School is constantly seeking additional strategies through which individual students may be supported and developed to ensure that they fulfil their potential. Its inclusive and collaborative approach has resulted in an increase in individual pupil attainment and a consequential improvement in the wider community's perception of the school.

Chapter 5

Pinewood School

School Facts



Pinewood School
Elm Grove
Blackburn
EH47 7QX
West Lothian
Tel: 01506 656374
Fax: 01506 650716

Headteacher

Ruth Bayne

Length of time in post

17 years

Type of school

Primary and Secondary Special school

Number of pupils

72 pupils: 40 primary and 32 secondary (48 girls/young women and 24 boys/young men)

Staff numbers

Teaching staff includes an assistant head teacher (partly non-teaching), 9 class teachers, a full-time swimming and PE teacher and a part-time music teacher. There are 7 nursery nurses and 7 FTE support assistants working in co-operative class teams with the teachers.

There is 1 FTE nurse, 2 speech and language therapists offer 11 sessions, and 5 hours of physiotherapy and 1 occupational therapy session are provided weekly.

The school doctor, educational psychologist and visiting teachers of the hearing and visually impaired are regular visitors.

Location/catchment area

Blackburn, near Bathgate, West Lothian

Physical environment

The single story school was purpose-built in 1974 and has two adjacent portacabins and a swimming pool.

% of pupils entitled to free meals

All children are entitled to free school meals as lunches are part of the curriculum.



Background

Pinewood serves the whole of West Lothian. The school enjoys close relationships with the EA's other three special schools, and with local primary and secondary schools in which Pinewood pupils sometimes have shared placements – there are currently 5 such placements. The staff situation is very stable. The pupil population however has changed markedly recently with more children having more severe and complex difficulties, including autism.

How we work towards achievement

We at Pinewood believe that achievements come from a school of happy and caring individuals who are keen to learn, do everything to the best of their ability and feel proud of all kinds of successes, big or small. A successful school values all pupils and staff. It gives them the opportunity and encouragement to optimise their potential in all aspects of school life in a positive and stimulating environment. Parents are included as genuine partners in the process.

Praise should never be spurious. We recognise success in individuals relative to what they were able to achieve before. We also encourage children to recognise this in their peers. Our pupils all have learning difficulties, in some cases severe and complex, but they are all capable of demonstrating development in many different ways. We have to be both optimistic and realistic.

We have a 'Pick of Pinewood' board in the entrance hall which records effort and success on a weekly basis. Certificates and badges awarded at weekly assembly are taken home to show parents (fig.1). Every pupil has a 'success file' with four sections: curriculum, social/behavioural aspects, sport and recreation, and 'other', in which certificates and other evidence of achievements are kept. Our secondary students have a fifth section for their full and varied leavers' programme. This file becomes the National Record of Achievement in S3. The school has a swimming trophy and there is a class trophy to encourage cohesion and joint effort in class. This was won recently by a class that organised a very successful fund-raising coffee morning for Oxfam.

Each class is responsible for an area of the school. Display and decoration reflect current projects and themes and students' work is never 'helped' although it is displayed to maximum effect. Resulting displays are recorded photographically to encourage pride in, and reflection on, past work.

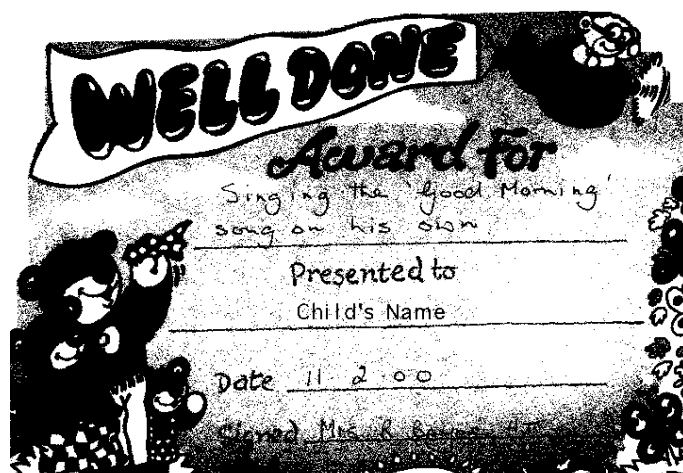


fig. 1

Good staff morale and respectful partnership with parents are the twin foundations of our work with the most important people of all, our pupils. Neither comes without effort. Teaching and caring for pupils with learning difficulties is immensely rewarding but it is also very demanding. Pupils may go through periods of being unwell, or of being 'stuck' in some difficult behaviour, or finding some aspect of learning very difficult to master. At such times teachers, parents and pupils may become discouraged and this can place a strain on relationships.

As a staff, we work hard but we find time to support each other. As Head Teacher, I must be accessible to all staff. Now our three senior teachers also have a listening and supporting role with their colleagues. We all find time to celebrate things together in school, or simply go out and enjoy ourselves.

Appropriate staff development is vital to staff morale, especially as our current pupils' diversity presents us with new challenges. Improving staff morale – already good – is one of our selected targets in the school development plan this year. Recent development activities topics included: Child Protection, Managing Difficult Behaviour, Higher Still Access I, Reading Development, Signs/Symbols for use with Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Play (for children and adults!), in addition to on-going whole staff sessions. In these we select aims for the school development plan, choose the appropriate strategies, and later evaluate their implementation

Staff-parent relationships underpin every part of our work and must be respectful, meaningful, honest and constructive. Less experienced staff are supported to ensure that letters home (fig. 2), home-school diaries and reports really do reflect the value we place on this partnership. Parents must feel empowered to come into school and to write to us with ideas and criticisms. Our termly report format asks for parents' responses (fig. 3)

PINEWOOD SCHOOL
PARENT'S REPORT FORM

I'm enclosing the school staff report (or reports). We would welcome your comments or additional information which will help us to provide the best possible education for your child. If you don't wish to write anything, please just sign the form and return it. Many thanks for your help.


Ruth Bayne,
Head Teacher.

Anything about the report which especially pleases you.
Anything in the report that concerns you.
Anything you'd like to add to our picture - leisure activities, feeding, dressing, communication etc.
Anything you would particularly like to discuss at the review.

Signed Date

fig. 3

and there is invariably a 100% return. This is especially useful during individual annual reviews, attended by parents and pupils. Parents come to school to talk specifically about their child, to find out about and contribute to school plans. They take part in all pupil reviews and join a wide range of celebrations, including our two annual musical and dramatic performances, Burns night and the Christmas party. If parents, for whatever reason, find coming in to school difficult we will visit them at home or meet wherever they wish.

 West Lothian Council Education Services	Pinewood School Headteacher: Ruth Bayne Elm Grove Blackburn Bathgate West Lothian EH47 7QX Tele. 01508 656374 Fax. 01508 650716 CB/GA 24 th June, 1999.
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Dear Mrs. and Mrs. X,

I am very pleased to be writing to let you know that Amy has been presented with the "Mark Smith" swimming trophy in school today. This trophy is awarded throughout the year to children who, at a given time, have shown excellent progress and/or effort in the pool. Amy qualifies on both counts. The class team and myself are very pleased with her progress indeed.


Amy can keep the trophy at home over the summer break when I feel sure she will enjoy showing it to all her family and friends. Have a lovely holiday.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Binnie

Carol Binnie,
Senior Teacher.

fig. 2

 West Lothian Council Education Services	Pinewood School Headteacher: Ruth Bayne Elm Grove Blackburn Bathgate West Lothian EH47 7QX Tele. 01508 656374 Fax. 01508 650716 RB/GA May 1999
--	---

Dear Parent,

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1999-2002

Every school must have a Development Plan - usually to cover 3 years with 4 or 5 specific targets to be met each year in areas of our school work which need improvement and/or developed.

We are in the process of writing our next Plan for 1999-2002. We have been examining the things we do well and the things we could do better! We will draft our next 3-year Plan, once we have your views.

I would be very grateful if you could help us to reach our final decision. Please fill in the questionnaire on the back of this form and return it to me at the school here just as soon as you can. You certainly don't have to do this - it is entirely voluntary but it will help us to improve our service if we know what you think of us and our work.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Bayne

Ruth Bayne
Head Teacher.

fig. 4

There is an annual parents' questionnaire at the beginning of the school year on what the school aims and activities should be for the coming year (see fig. 4 on previous page). In June 1999 we also used a questionnaire to ask parents for their frank (and anonymous if they wished) views on Pinewood's ethos, based on the SOEID ethos indicators. We had a 56% response, almost totally positive. The relatively low level of response probably related to the many other opportunities parents have to speak with us. However, there was a small number of individual responses which indicated that there was a need for even more contact and information. We immediately responded positively to this. Such processes feed in to our school development plan that evolves both from our own self-evaluation and from the Authority's quality assurance audits.

We now think we should ensure that pupils' own voices are heard more clearly in the running of the school. Classroom Circletime activities and a very interactive weekly school assembly already encourage this. Each class – pupils and staff team together – produce five aims annually which the class strives to achieve (fig. 5).

OUR TEAM VALUES

Date September 1999

Class Name _____

We, as a team, have agreed to promote the following 5 values in our classroom to create the best possible environment for quality learning and teaching.

1. *A happy, relaxed atmosphere for both staff and pupils*
2. *All staff and pupils should feel a valued member of the team and be shown respect.*
3. *Fairness and consistency in dealing with the needs of each pupil in a manner appropriate to their age and individual ability*
4. *Effort and success should be recognised, valued and praised.*
5. *Staff and pupils should feel safe and secure in the classroom environment.*

.....
 Class Teacher Nursery Nurse Auxiliary/Support Assistant


fig. 5

Additionally, a pupils' council will start this summer and our older students' representatives will attend and participate in some staff meetings.

If pupils are to achieve academic success we must be confident that we are offering them an appropriate curriculum and individual short and long-term targets which reflect high but realistic expectations. The

frameworks used are the 5-14 guidelines and now, for older secondary pupils, Higher Still Access Level I which now offers our pupils their right to national certification. Working up to Level A and achieving it or passing some Higher Still Access learning outcomes are as significant for some of our pupils as achieving 5-14 Level E or Advanced Highers might be for some of their age peers.

We had been working with parents in setting individualised learning targets for our pupils for the last ten years (fig. 6). The more recent SOEID initiatives on target setting within IEPs was simply an opportunity to refine this process within an appropriately balanced



West Lothian Council
Education Services

Pinewood School
Headteacher: Ruth Bayne
Elm Grove
Blackburn
Bathgate
West Lothian
EH47 7DX

Tel: 01506 656374
Fax: 01506 650716

RB/GA
24th January, 2000.

Dear Parent,

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Your child's Individual Educational Programme (I.E.P. for short) will be written over the next 2 or 3 weeks and sent out to you after that.

Is there an area of your child's development that you would like included as one of this term's Short-Term-Targets? It could be any aspect e.g. dressing, eating, behaviour, language and communication etc. which maybe the class team could help with in school.

If so, could you fill in the slip below and return it to the school – we'll only be too happy to try to help.

Yours sincerely,
Ruth Bayne
 Ruth Bayne
 Head Teacher.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Term _____ Date _____ Child's Name _____

Please write your area of concern or development below and it will be included as an educational attainment target for this term.

Signed _____ Date _____

Thank you for your help.

I would like you to include _____

Let 2 IEP

fig. 6

curriculum. For most of our pupils this means a greater focus on personal and social development and on communication. Reading has been a prime focus this session.

Sport is an important part of the curriculum and one that enables our pupils to participate in the wider community. Our pupils have competed in the National Swimming Gala as part of the Lothian Schools Team, participated in inter-school football matches with another special school and in 'Come and Try' sessions. They have benefited from football skills training from the SFA Development Officer. Our three senior teachers have some devolved responsibilities for working on a termly rotating basis with the infant, primary and secondary classes in the school to help plan strategies to meet the school's development plan. By using a rotating system we can ensure coherence and continuity throughout the school.

Our pupils have a right to a safe and happy school environment but in 1998 we were concerned at the number of playground incidents reported. Our support assistants formed a task group to plan constructive approaches, making a range of recommendations: the staggering of breaks for senior and junior pupils, playing enjoyable but 'non-agitating' music in bad weather indoor breaks, diverting pupils more likely to be involved in incidents and ensuring their good behaviour was noted and rewarded. This was implemented very successfully at the beginning of 1999 and a detailed record kept (see quantitative evidence below).

Evidence for achievement

Visitors to our school frequently comment on pupils' obvious application to curricular activities and to the feelings of respect and warm relationships in the school community. In our 1999 parents' questionnaire 100% of parents agreed 'strongly' or simply agreed with the statements, among others, that 'If I had to start again, I would still send my child to Pinewood' and 'I think the curriculum is appropriate'.

Parents have written the following:

'I feel the success and achievement of the school is shown by the fact that my child, given the option, would attend 7 days a week, 365 days a year.'

'Success is having my hopes and dreams of my daughter learning to read finally start to come true.'

'When a school helps a child to reach personal 'possible' targets, that's achievement; when the child herself is pleased with her own achievements, that's success.'

Pupils themselves say:

'I get a badge or a certificate when I have worked well. I take it home and my mum and dad see it. It makes them feel happy and I feel happy.'

'I know I have read well or done a jigsaw quickly when my teacher says, "Well done". Sometimes she gives me a sticker or a certificate and that makes me feel good.'

- ◆ Achievement of individualised learning targets during 1999 was 78% across the school. Our school featured as an exemplar of good practice in the SEED publication, *Raising Standards-Setting Targets, Support Pack: Special Educational Needs* (1999).
- ◆ Successful participation in the leavers' programme has resulted in increasing participation in FE Life Skills Courses after leaving school (3 or 4 pupils each year for the last four years, where previously all school-leavers attended social work resource centres).
- ◆ 16 pupils are currently participating in this first year of Higher Still Access I programmes.

- ◆ A former pupil progressed directly into supported open employment last year, a first for Pinewood. He has now successfully completed his trial period as a hospital porter and is a full employee.
- ◆ Parental attendance at individual pupil reviews: 100% (except in cases of illness).
- ◆ Parental attendance at other school events: 50-90%.
- ◆ Parental response to termly reports: 100%.
- ◆ 75% reduction in reported behaviour incidents in school and playground between January 1999 and January 2000.
- ◆ 1 former pupil, continuing in sports begun at school, has won over 50 medals in powerweight lifting and 1 present pupil (S4/5) has won over 70 medals in athletics and power-lifting in the Special Olympics. Both have represented Scotland abroad.
- ◆ Pupil-organised fund-raising activities during 1999 raised £59 for Oxfam and £105 for children in Bosnia.
- ◆ Pupils this session have twice entertained local elderly people.
- ◆ Increasing opportunities for shared placements between our school and local primary and secondary mainstream schools, five pupils currently, 25 over the last five years. (However, success is measured by pupils' progress and social inclusion, not by the number of placements).

Where now?

We are committed to continuous self-evaluation and improvement using national indicators and more personal perspectives highlighted by the school and post-school careers of our pupils. Our priorities are:

1. to increase participation by pupils in their own learning process, including the setting of targets, involvement in the pupils' council (starting this summer) and participation in national certification programmes and schemes such as Higher Still (begun this session) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (beginning next year);
2. to ensure staff development to meet the learning needs of our increasingly diverse pupil population and to build staff self-esteem, and
3. to continue to celebrate all our successes to recognise the hard work undertaken together by pupils, parents and staff and to enjoy our shared school life!

Chapter 6

Crieff High School

School Facts



Crieff High School
Crieff
PH7 3RS
Perth & Kinross
Tel: 01764 654 118
Fax: 01764 654 739

Headteacher

Peter McAvoy

Length of time in post

3 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

595

Staff numbers (FTE)

48

Location/catchment area

Green countryside, with views of the mountains of the North & West

Physical environment

1970's building

% of pupils entitled to free meals

5%



Background

The school is situated on the south-eastern edge of Crieff with a pleasant outlook across the town to the mountains of the north and west and across the rich farmland of Strathearn Valley to the south and east. Crieff itself has a population of 6,000 and lies 18 miles west of Perth, acting as a centre for West Perthshire. The surrounding environment is among the most pleasant in Scotland and annually attracts a large number of tourists. There is considerable interest in education in the area and a reservoir of parental support to be tapped.

Pupils transfer each year from the associated Primary schools of Crieff, Muthill, Braco, Madderty, Greenloaning, St. Fillan's and Comrie. We also receive a consistent intake of pupils from St. Dominic's R.C. Primary School.

The school was officially opened in 1970 and upgraded to its present status of a Six Year School in Session 1976/77. Crieff High is fortunate in having good classroom and practical accommodation and extensive playing fields next to the school. Use is made of the Games Hall and Swimming Pool facilities at the nearby Recreation Centre and the Crieff Hydro Hotel.

A Building Development Programme has been agreed with the school. Forthcoming priorities include further improvements to classroom facilities, window replacement and the refurbishment of specific areas of the school building.

Introduction

Crieff High School has worked hard over the last few years to develop a range of pupil-centred support projects in the First and Second Year stages of school life and work. The central principle – as stated in one of the school aims – is to “be an educational community where every individual is valued, has equal opportunities to develop and learn and strives to achieve his or her potential”.

The school, like many if not most others, has established structures of support provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or emotional/behavioural needs. The significance of the projects included in this Case Study emphasise the **inclusive** nature of the school's approach to promoting an ethos of achievement in S1 and S2.

S1 Form Tutors

A conscious decision was made to reduce the size of register classes in S1 to allow form teachers to get to know the pupils and not merely to undertake a ten minute administrative process at the start of each school day. Appropriate staff were consulted about the possible opportunities for such pastoral support and form teachers were identified. They then met to discuss the issues raised until agreement was reached with all eight form tutors about the following remit.

Aims

- ◆ To ease transition from Primary to Secondary school.
- ◆ To encourage pupils to value education and to take pride in their work and achievements.
- ◆ To encourage pupils to adopt and maintain good study habits which will enhance their learning.
- ◆ To encourage pupils to participate in the extended life of the school (e.g. extra curricular activities, social events, fund raising events).

Responsibilities

Staff agreed to use the time available to monitor the various aspects of the pupils' work, including the use of school planners, familiarisation with the timetable, presentation of work, etc., on a twelve week cycle. Early evidence suggests that First Year pupils are much more likely to discuss school and other issues with their form teacher and they are aware that this person has a keen eye on their progress. All pupils in First Year have benefited from the clearly defined and rigorous tutor support and the Guidance team have an additional “early warning” system as well as an enhanced structure of support.

The “Get Smart” Project

Crieff High School introduced the “GET SMART” Programme in 1998, as part of the school's ongoing response to working in partnership with parents towards raising standards, setting targets and achieving success.

- ◆ viewing teachers' plans;
- ◆ looking at children's work, e.g. jotters, project folders, models;
- ◆ listening and talking to children;
- ◆ viewing displays on classroom walls;
- ◆ visiting classrooms and related learning environments.

Subject departments prepare a forward plan of proposed monitoring activities for the forthcoming school session. All teachers participate in identifying key areas for monitoring, the timing of visits, teachers involved and evidence required (fig. 2).

CRIEFF HIGH SCHOOL		HOME ECONOMICS DEPT.			
MONITORING OF HOMEWORK					
CLASS MONITORED: _____					
CLASS TEACHER: _____					
DATE MONITORED: _____					
TEACHER MONITORING: _____					
ISSUES TO BE MONITORED	YES	NO	MOSTLY	SOME-TIMES	RARELY
1. Homework is issued every week.					
2. Homework is always marked by the class teacher.					
3. There is graffiti on the homework books /workbooks.					
4. Homework is always signed by parents.					
5. There is answer sheets/grids for each set of homework.					
6. Homework is always recorded in the Teacher's planner.					
7. There is differentiated homework.					
8. Majority of pupils hand in homework on time.					
9. Homework fits in with the course being taught.					
COMMENTS:					

fig. 2

Promoting improved attainment in literacy

The English Department has prepared a number of special support projects aimed at the whole year cohorts of S1 and S2. A campaign to reinforce basic literacy skills including the use of capital letters, proper paragraphing and good sentence construction has developed through a series of "Miss Right" leaflets (fig. 3). Every English classroom has a poster indicating which aspect of language Miss Right is encouraging pupils to concentrate on. Miss Right is rather tough and uncompromising. If errors occur following her intervention the pupil will be asked to rewrite the whole piece of writing in which the error is to be found. Clearly, though, if the recurring error is caused by a major weakness or difficulty, that weakness will be address or the difficulty talked through. The "hard line" is only adopted where a pupil has learned the topic but has neglected to apply his/her knowledge. The department also distributed the leaflets to all staff

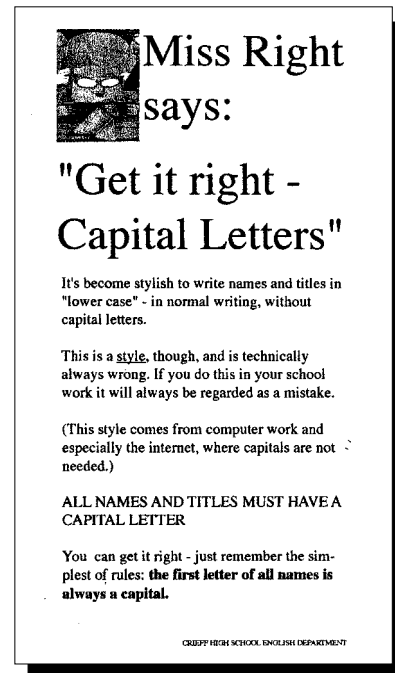


fig. 3

together with a request to be consistent in reinforcing good practice and correcting bad. A 'Take off to Reading' scheme has also been introduced to encourage First and Second Years to read more often and more widely. The History Department has stepped in to support the literacy campaign by advocating and purchasing historical fiction and non-fiction books as part of the S1/2 social subjects course. Other departments are also developing approaches on similar lines.

Pupil Tracking

The school has introduced a systematic tracking of pupil progress and performance in all subjects in S1 and S2. Unlike the 'normal' tracking of academic attainment, however, this project aims to identify pupils who are not working to their potential for specific reasons – as perceived by the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers are asked to code information about S1/2 pupils every 10 weeks using the following indicators:

Standard Codes

W = Working well

All classwork and homework completed to best of ability. Consistently good attitude to work following teacher's instructions at all times. Good relationships with class peers.

S = Satisfactory

Does what is required all or most of the time. Behaviour does not give cause for concern.

U = Unsatisfactory

Not working to potential. Teachers will then use one, or more, of the supplementary codes to provide more information as to the nature of the problem.

Supplementary Codes

- B = Behaviour giving cause for concern
- A = Attendance giving cause for concern
- E = Failure to bring necessary equipment
- R = Poor relationships with peers
- I = Does not listen to/follow teacher's instructions

Peer Support

The use of Sixth Year peer tutors as a support device for S1 is now well established within the school.

Pupil Planners

Prepared with detailed advice on school policy in such areas as anti-bullying, discipline, homework, etc. The planners are sponsored by local businesses.

Pupil Council

Meets regularly to discuss issues of concern about school life and work from a pupil perspective.

Positive Behaviour Management

The use of praise and rewards is now accepted practice, particularly in S1/2 where special biannual commendation award ceremonies are held to allocate Gold, Silver, Bronze and Participation award certificates (fig. 4).

Follow Up

Collated results are sent to all departments and specific follow up is indicated with one of the following:

- G = Guidance Interview
- Y = Year Head Interview
- YHL = Letter to parents
- SFL = Referral to Support for Learning
- D = Departmental follow up

The pupil tracking database is additional to existing procedures such as referrals to Guidance.

Involving Parents

Parents are always encouraged to support their child's learning by active participation in different projects. Get Smart, Pupil Planners, Pupil Tracking, Commendation Awards and literacy campaigns have highlighted the importance of parental support. The school provides all parents with specific information bulletins, e.g. Homework, Anti-bullying and Raising Attainment

S1 and S2 Reports provide details of pupil performance within the 5-14 guidelines as well as information about course content

Other Strategies

Curriculum Rationalisation

In response to the recommendations made by HMI's "Achieving Success in S1 and S2" report, the school has moved towards a blocking system in Technology and the integration of Social Subjects and Science courses in S1/2. First Year pupils are now taught by eleven or twelve subject teachers per week rather than sixteen or seventeen.

Circle Time

This is used in a number of subject areas. Perhaps most significantly, the circle time strategy (building on the Jenny Mosely model) has been used to great effect in S1 French.

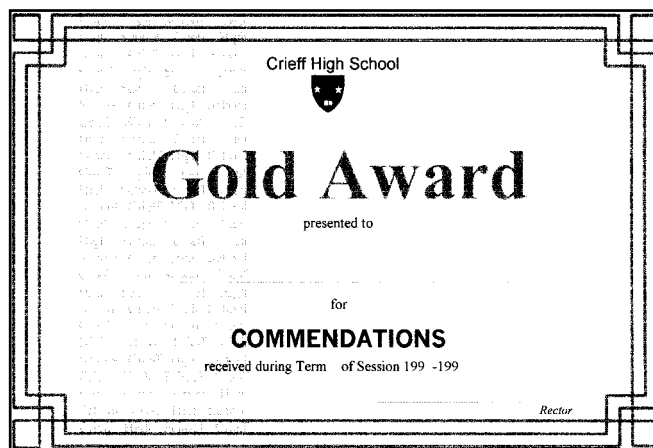


fig. 4

School Celebration of Success

First and Second Year pupils receive appropriate commendations throughout the school year and parents are invited to attend two commendation ceremonies per session. Gold, Silver and Bronze awards are made and there is also a certificate awarded for participation in school activities. The school also holds weekly Junior School and Senior School assemblies where an attempt is made by the Head Teacher to recognise and reward individual, team/group or whole school success. Information is regularly relayed to the local newspaper and photographs of young people are regularly included in local news items. The school also tries to participate as often as possible in regional or national competitions and has achieved success at both levels.

Chapter 7

St. Kenneth's Primary School

School Facts



St Kenneth's Primary School
Blairmore Road
Greenock
PA15 3JS
Inverclyde
Tel: 01475 715 687
Fax: 01475 724 413

Headteacher

Maureen McGarrity

Length of time in post

8 years

Type of school

5-11 Primary

Number of pupils

146

Staff numbers (FTE)

8

Location/catchment area

East end of Greenock, Inverclyde

Physical environment

Urban, mid-sixties building with very generous accommodation, e.g. large assembly hall, dining room, gymnasium and computer suite

% of pupils entitled to free meals

37%



Background

St. Kenneth's Primary School is located in the east end of Greenock, serving the Strone and South Maukinhill areas. The school is small with seven classes and each teacher has a full time class commitment. The school has a mixed catchment area, parts of which have over the years suffered from great deprivation, poor housing and serious unemployment with the decline in shipbuilding and associated heavy industry. However, over the past two or three years, the area has greatly improved. There are opportunities for employment in electronic and call centres. Pupils, parents and staff have recently formed a PTA to help the school raise funds for a variety of projects.

The impetus for change

In January 1992, Maureen McGarrity arrived at St. Kenneth's as Head Teacher. She had previously taught there as a senior teacher and on her return, she inherited a happy school, with an excellent staff and many positive features. She was aware that many teachers nationally had very low morale. They felt de-skilled, under pressure to implement major changes in the curriculum and were poorly regarded by the media. St Kenneth's nevertheless was a happy school with a good ethos, sustained by a number of positive features:

- ◆ Hard working teachers
- ◆ Good working relationships
- ◆ Relationships based on mutual understanding and trust
- ◆ Staff who had a commitment to the school and to the pastoral care of the pupils

It became clear, however, that most effort was being made to ensure that all children, especially the less able, were numerate and literate. In fact the more able children were not really being challenged. A happy school did not equate with an achieving school. It was evident that there was a need for change. The very positive supportive ethos which existed among the staff meant that they were willing to try some new ideas and were prepared to accept the fact that some radical changes had to be made.

Against this background, Maureen was determined that St Kenneth's had the potential to become a centre of excellence. The journey to becoming an achieving school has been an interesting, exciting, challenging one for each member of staff and more importantly has been of great benefit to all the pupils.

The most significant factors involved in the change of ethos were:

- ◆ Development planning
- ◆ Devolved management of resources
- ◆ Development of a collaborative approach to change
- ◆ Involvement in ISEP

Perhaps the most significant of these has been the school's involvement with ISEP – the Improving School Effectiveness Project from 1996 -1998. By 1996, staff confidence had increased and the entire staff agreed to be part of the project and volunteered to be a case study school. This project was attempting to measure the "added value" which the school was making to pupil performance. The staff believed that despite many difficulties and challenges that they were doing a good job. This was an opportunity to access objective evidence which might prove this assumption.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence was collected over a period of two years. This evidence was analysed by researchers and the information passed back to staff. The initial feedback was very positive and highlighted many strengths of the school. However, staff were very unhappy

**Improving School Effectiveness Project (I.S.E.P.)
Value Added Feedback to Project Schools – 1998**

Assessment		Value added category		
		Positive	As expected	Negative
Mathematics	Number of schools St. Kenneth's School	11 ✓	24	9
Suffolk Reading test	Number of schools St. Kenneth's School	9 ✓	32	3
Reading	Number of schools St. Kenneth's School	5 ✓	36	3

N.B. The Results are based on assessments carried out on the same cohort of children in Primary 4 and then in Primary 6.

fig. 1

when the pupils' performance in all areas was not nearly as good as expected. Although only Primary 4 had been assessed, the staff assumed collective responsibility for the results and were keen to work together towards a whole school improvement. The areas tackled were Reading for Information and pace of progress in 5-14 Mathematics. In addition to this a new reading scheme was adopted which would allow for much more differentiation than before. Staff at every stage in the school knew that they had a crucial role to play if pupil achievement was to be improved.

When the results of the ISEP Project were published the staff were proud to discover that their efforts to raise achievement had been successful. St. Kenneth's school was one of only 3 schools out of the 44 schools in the project which had significantly added value in all three areas which had been assessed (fig.1).

'We were a happy school,' says Maureen, 'but now we could better be described as a happy, achieving school.' The results of this project gave everyone a great boost. Staff morale and confidence are high and the school has moved from strength to strength.

The school is now an oasis of positive thinking. Staff now also look at problems and difficulties in a different light.

'When any problem is identified, we look for a solution. There is a culture of 'no blame' and this has resulted in genuine teamwork among the staff.'

Helen Clews, a teacher at St Kenneth's, recognises that while the staff have always been hard working, their work has been given a new focus in recent years – raising achievement across the board.

She has described it as *'channeling our energy into different areas and using our skills and those of the children in a variety of ways.'*

Staff have worked hard to develop the children's self esteem and to increase their expectations. Every opportunity has been taken to enrich the children's experiences. Through supported study and by using school funds, opportunities have been given for children to work with artists, dancers, drama groups. One class worked on a philosophy programme for ten weeks and were then guests at Glasgow University for a day. The pupils now star in an annual pantomime and have the opportunity to take part in the recently formed Concert Band. Achievement in the expressive arts, academic subjects and sport are all valued in St Kenneth's, as are good behaviour, good attendance, kindness and courtesy. However the uniqueness of every child and their best efforts are what we value most. Certificates are regularly presented to pupils for improvement in all aspects of the curriculum (fig. 2).

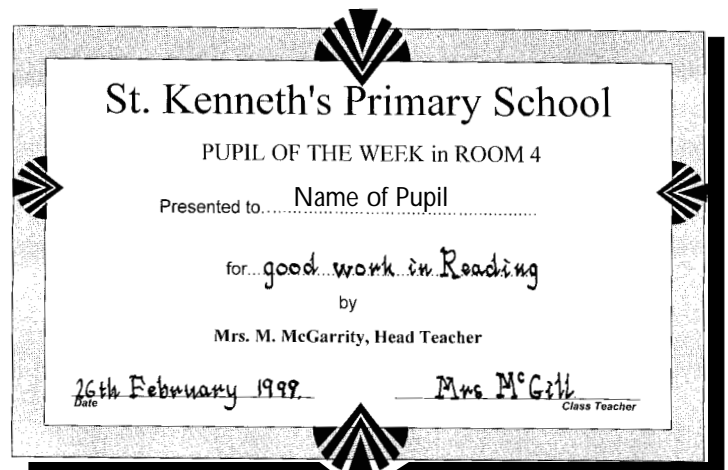


fig. 2

Developing the staff

Staff development is a prominent issue in school development plans. Staff have all had training on Myers Briggs assessments and in different learning styles. They work with leading researchers to implement the latest findings on the workings of the brain and the implications for teaching and learning. Some teachers are now developing an interest in the use of music to enhance thinking skills.

Teachers recently took each other's classes for a half day, with some surprising results! No-one knew exactly when this would happen or whose class they were going to take or who would be taking their class – names were drawn out of a hat in the morning. The main outcomes of the day were that staff evaluated the quality of planning in their daily diary, they had an opportunity to visit another stage for a morning and many good ideas were 'borrowed.' The staff also realized that colleagues have different challenges in other stages of the school and they could observe how well other classes were organised. It is a measure of staff confidence and of how they operate as a team that they willingly agreed to take part in this exercise.

Isabel Delussey, the Depute Head, has been working recently on the school's 'Effective Teachers' programme. Staff acknowledge that a particular member of staff is skilled in motivating boys and raising their attainment. The Head and Depute have tried to identify aspects of her teaching which may account for the boys' success. They were especially keen to learn from pupils what they thought a 'good' teacher should be like! It was hoped that the boys' responses would explain why they responded so well to their teacher's teaching style. Isabel conducted some research among the pupils with the following results:

Pupils thought that a good teacher was fair, treated you with respect, rewarded effort, was approachable, set appropriate work and expected you to do your best and was good at teaching.

Pupils thought that a bad teacher would shout, have a bad temper, not respect you and have teacher's pets.

Describing the attributes of a good teacher, two boys in P7 wrote:

'She helps us to realize that we are young adults. She encourages us to do the right thing. We are able to have a joke with her. She treats us fairly and helps us and explains our work when we have a problem. She lets us do things we have not done before. She gives us the responsibility.'

'She is able to know how much work is appropriate for that person. We feel that we can work independently but we can still ask for help. If we are about to start a new part of work, the teacher will have the books ready and she knows what to do. She is also very fair. The teacher will always treat you with the respect you deserve. She will always get the very best work out of a person and show them what they are capable of.'

The school's research has revealed that the boys liked instant feedback, a clear step by step approach and high expectations. They especially liked the fact that their teacher was extremely well organized and would accept

only their best work. The staff are now engaged in regular professional discussions and are developing an interest in learning and teaching styles.

Monitoring classroom practice – classroom management and organization

This session staff at St Kenneth's will implement a collaborative project to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom situation. After much discussion and reflection, they have identified a number of indicators which they feel would enable them to monitor classroom practice. These include classroom ethos, resources and physical environment.

For example, under classroom ethos, they will look at atmosphere, discipline, work routine and assessment. They have identified a level of performance which they define as Excellent (fig 3).

Staff will use the results of this exercise to evaluate their present performance and identify strengths and weaknesses in their classroom practice.

Atmosphere

Very calm/relaxed
Very organized
Mutual respect is evident
Good relationships exist
Kindness and generosity in evidence
Great pride in work, class and school.
Children try to do their best

Discipline

Positive approach
Children are self disciplined
Praise used often and appropriately
High expectations
Children are clear about class rules
Children have very good manners
Children always well behaved
Children have high self esteem


Routine

Very well organized
Programme of work understood by all
Purposeful, everyone on task
Clearly set work and time targets
Seamless transition to next activity
Good balance of individual, group and whole class teaching
Evidence of independent learning

Assessment

Well planned assessment of children's work
Wide variety of assessments used

fig. 3



Progress Report

Name: Name of Pupil

Class:

Date:

Language

How good is your Language? Please Tick.

very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>
good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	fair	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please comment on your progress in :-

<p>Reading</p> <p>OK. I am improving and like stories in my reading books. Some are very interesting.</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>My listening is very good, but I get easily distracted. On the whole I am OK.</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>My presentation is good it has got better since I started. Primary 7.</p>	<p>Writing</p> <p>My writing is OK. I like writing poetry and stories and other genre like reports and plays.</p> <p>Talking</p> <p>I find it very hard to talk in front of the whole class. But it is just something I have to get used to.</p>
---	--

Mathematics

How good is your Maths? Please Tick.

very good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>
good	<input type="checkbox"/>	fair	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please comment on your progress in Maths. I really like my maths my favorite things are like co-ordinates and tiling I also like cutting out things like shapes. I take a great interest in my maths the way I should.

Expressive Arts

How good are you in Expressive Arts? Please Tick.

very good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>
good	<input type="checkbox"/>	fair	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please comment on your progress in :-

<p>Art</p> <p>I like drawing the best! especially black and white.</p> <p>P.E.</p> <p>I am good at gymnastics and games.</p>	<p>Drama</p> <p>I am OK at drama. I am much better in my at home.</p> <p>Music</p> <p>I am very good on music I can play the piano a bit too.</p>
--	---

Environmental Studies / Topic Work

How good are you in Environmental Studies? Please Tick.

very good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>
good	<input type="checkbox"/>	fair	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please comment on your progress in all aspects of Environmental Studies. I like it I like History but I like technology too.

Please comment on your effort, attitude and behaviour. I do not put all my effort into things my attitude is OK too. My behaviour is OK sometimes bad.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

fig. 4

Parents' views

Parents, too, acknowledge the efforts made by the school to give every pupil an appropriate curriculum. Recently a group of parents of P1 pupils visited the classroom to see their youngsters at work. Comments included:

'I found it really good yesterday morning being able to see how your child does in the classroom. The way everything is laid out is brilliant and they behave well.'

'I found the visit today very interesting and informative. It was nice to see the children looking so relaxed and comfortable in their environment. I was quite pleased with my daughter's progress and it was good for me to see for myself how well she is doing.'

'The children were very active and their attention was captured in all the activities and tasks the teacher set up. Looking forward to my next visit.'

The school is fortunate to be a happy place in which to teach and learn. Over the past few years we have seen an improvement in pupil performance at 5-14 levels. Pupils are now encouraged to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses across the 5-14 programme (fig.4).

It has been an interesting and exciting journey of self-evaluation and improvement. The staff know that the school has improved. They are proud to have received a Scottish Schools Ethos Network award in 1999. They are, however, not complacent but feel that they can make further improvements. They are actively seeking new challenges, motivated by the fact that they really are making a difference to their pupils' achievements and that their efforts have been recognised at local and national levels.

Chapter 8

Castle Douglas High School

School Facts



Castle Douglas High School
Dunmuir Road
Castle Douglas
DG7 1LQ
Dumfries & Galloway
Tel /Fax: 01556 502 821

Headteacher

Iain Proudfoot

Length of time in post

10 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

563

Staff numbers (FTE)

42.16

Location/catchment area

Situated on the edge of Castle Douglas, a rural market town

Physical environment

Built in the 1950's comprising 4 separate buildings

% of pupils entitled to free meals

7.1%



Background

The school population is relatively stable showing a slight increase over the last ten years reflecting growth in the rural population. The Stewartry of Kirkcudbright is an area of small net inward migration. The school enjoys excellent relations with the three other secondary schools in the area which share similar high levels of achievement. Each school accommodates the pupils from its own catchment area with parents happy to support their local school and, therefore, minimal placement requests. There are also positive links between our school and the eight – very diverse – feeder primary schools, ranging in size from a two stream school to several single teacher schools.

Staff turnover is low with SMT and PTs staying in post over a number of years. Probationer and other young staff are more likely to return to Scotland's central belt to seek their first promoted posts because our subject Departments are, in general, too small to allow for APT posts.

We work closely with local employers (work experience placements, careers talks and mock interviews) and with the local Rotary Club (Young Enterprise Advisers, RYLA Youth Camps mock interviews, careers talks and music competitions) and Burns Society (verse and singing competitions).

How we work towards success

Although our school is probably perceived as an 'academic' school, because of publication of Standard Grade and Highers results, our concept of achievement and of individual and collective success is much wider than good results in national qualifications, however important they are. We believe that all pupils should be enabled to develop to their greatest potential in as broad a sphere as possible, academic and non-academic. Plainly, the school has a vital role in this development along with parents and with the wider local community.

In many ways our school could be categorised as conservative (with a small 'c!') and cautious in its approach to change. This does not mean that we oppose change but rather that we investigate thoroughly the best means to bring about desirable change before embarking on it. As the quantitative evidence given later will demonstrate, Castle Douglas High School is very successful academically. This is not just with an elite group of pupils but across the full range of what is a comprehensive intake. The only local pupils not included in the school are those with more severe and complex learning difficulties who attend special school. Our Learning Centre and its learning support staff undertake the teaching of pupils with difficulties in learning. Ten pupils have Records of Need. Centre, staff support them and their subject teachers within mainstream subject classes, and assist subject departments in differentiating the curriculum. The Castle Douglas area has a high proportion of foster caring families and also an Authority Residential Home so some pupils are troubled youngsters who may reflect this in their behaviour and attitudes to school.

The school is organised from first year along subject department lines. Long-established staff are committed to ensuring the progress of classes and of individuals within classes. Where additional support is needed on an individual or small group basis, this is provided unquestioningly by subject staff either informally, including in breaks, in class, or through study/homework clubs which were established here long before their current vogue!

'I think the teachers shouldn't under-sell themselves. They're very hard-working and very motivated and that produces well-motivated pupils. There are high expectations for them, even those who are not that academic, I think they are still encouraged to achieve to the very best of their ability' (Teacher comment).

A pupil endorses this, 'The teachers are very, very helpful and if you don't understand anything and they're free you can always just go and talk to them about anything you want, really'.

This is undoubtedly a great strength as is the fact that, in general, we can rely on parental and community support for our pupils' efforts and our own towards academic achievement, good attendance, time-keeping and behaviour. Parents asked to give reasons for our success wrote, *'Combination of staff, pupils, curriculum, quality of*

teaching', and 'Combination of the small size and rural location together with the enthusiasm and involvement of staff working together. Excellent atmosphere plus good work ethos'. Despite time-tabling issues for small schools, there are advantages. As one teacher remarked, 'All the pupils are known by all the teachers and if you actually teach them you know them really well'.

The minority of pupils leaving after 4th or 5th year usually enter vocational education in agriculture or other colleges or go directly into agricultural or other employment. The diversity of the school population is now continued into 5th and 6th years where we have very high staying on levels. In the current session 77% of the previous 4th year stayed on and 86% of the previous 5th year are now in 6th year. Where before two Highers would have been the minimum aspirations of pupils in 5th year, there are now some pupils undertaking a programme entirely of Higher Still Intermediate I and II level courses while others will be aiming for five Highers, and some will be taking a mixture. Similarly, in 6th Year some pupils might be taking one Higher and some Intermediate Level courses while others might be taking three or four SYS (Advanced Highers from next year).

Higher Still Access, II and III courses, also coming on stream next session, will allow us to vary and augment the curriculum for the small number of pupils in the school, including those who are supported by Learning Centre staff, for whom Standard Grade offered only limited opportunities for successful certification.

The Guidance system has a critical co-ordinating and monitoring role in relation to pupils' academic and social development. Pupil year groups have the same guidance teacher through S1 to S5, ensuring continuity and depth of mutual understanding. A pupil comment commends the guidance and PSE programme, 'The guidance is really good, you discuss really important things, like what you're going to do and how you should set targets and goals, and about anti-bullying'. The school prides itself on the extremely detailed individual reports drawn up for every pupil prior to annual meetings with parents. These provide an opportunity to detail and celebrate both effort and achievement, although these are also signalled to pupils face to face. Ironically, one of our areas of current concern is the apparently low attendance at parents' evenings, particularly higher up the school. While it would be good to think that non-attendance reflected satisfaction with the school and its reporting system, it would be complacent to assume this. We are therefore planning to investigate parental perceptions through the very supportive School Board and PTA.

The award of school certificates for participation and success in non-academic events such as the annual Leavers' Assembly, Scots verse-speaking (fig. 1) and singing competitions and speech-making (fig. 2), complements the more traditional academic annual prize-giving event. A small sample of parents were asked about this aspect of the school. One noted, 'I am certainly aware of a number of pupils who have excelled in a range of

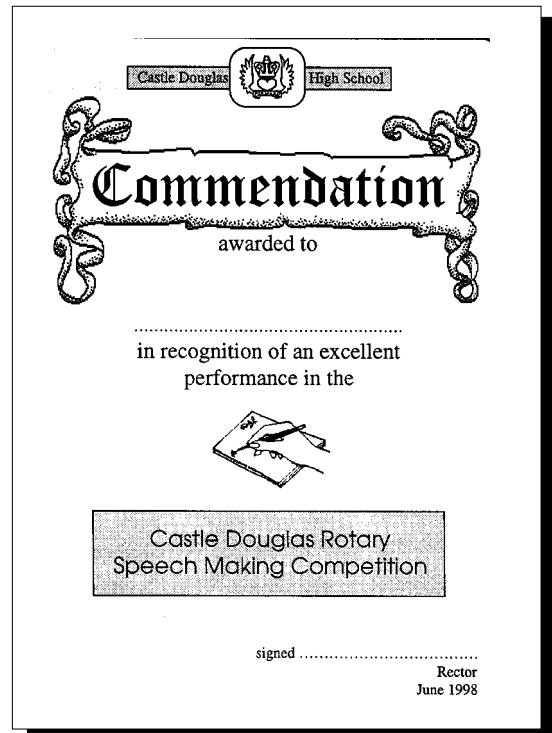


fig. 1

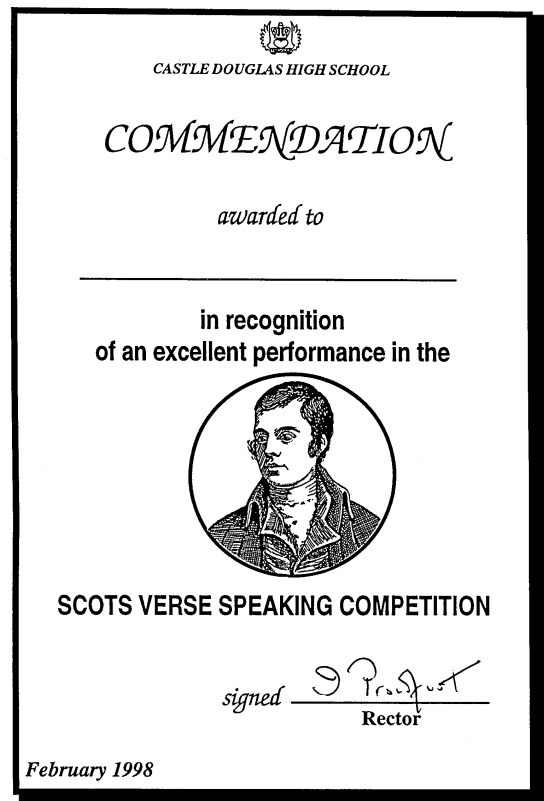


fig. 2

fields... celebration does take place', but another felt we could do more to publicise sporting, music and art successes. Whole-school assemblies have individual themes, such as 'Healthy Living', 'Study Skills' and 'Anti Smoking' which link with our PSE programme. They are organised by our Guidance staff and a wide range of pupils who are also awarded certificates for their efforts (fig. 3).

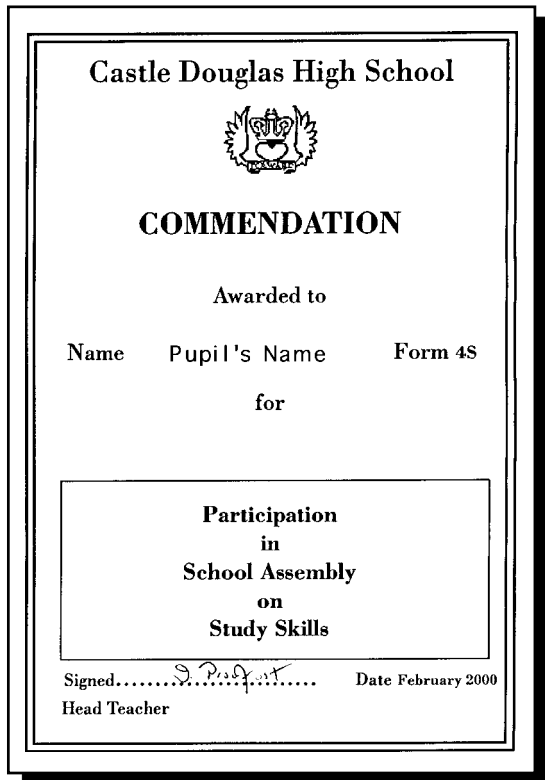


fig. 3

Pupils' work is displayed both centrally and in classrooms. The highly successful annual school show, involving over eighty pupils and many staff, allows a diversity of talents to emerge and is a real whole school community effort. *'It's this idea of the whole school coming together, being involved in these activities – I think they are wonderful. It works really well here'* (Teacher comment). Musical groups undertake entertainment visits to Old Folks Homes. Each year in the week before Christmas the school community also puts great effort into its 'Charities week' – an opportunity to benefit selected charities and to have fun. Last year we raised £1500 for the local Rotary Club's appeal for Kosovo. *'We've got some once-a-year week things that we do that really help the relationships of staff and pupils to bond, like Charities Week and the Health Week'* (Senior pupil comment). There is a substantial commitment by staff and parents to ensuring that a wide programme of excursions – work, sport and leisure related – continue to take place despite increasing costs. We would like to think that all these opportunities are an adequate response to the pupil who recorded his view of the school thus, *'The atmosphere at times could lighten up around the school, sometimes it's a bit serious'*

Evidence of success

Our results in SCE/CSYS Examinations have been consistently above average in comparison with Authority and National figures, giving us both satisfaction and concerns. Yes, they are good, but can we sustain them? Should we be able to improve them further?

Results			
% of the relevant September roll with 3+ S-Grades @ 1-2 in S4			
	1996-7	1997-8	1998-9
Castle Douglas HS	66	68	70
Dumfries & Galloway	48	47	47
Scotland	41	42	43
% of the relevant September roll with 3+ S-Grades @ 1-4 in S4			
	1996-7	1997-8	1998-9
Castle Douglas HS	93	92	94
Dumfries & Galloway	88	88	88
Scotland	83	84	85
% of the relevant September roll with 3+ H-Grades @ A-C in S5			
	1996-7	1997-8	1998-9
Castle Douglas HS	39	46	49
Dumfries & Galloway	25	26	22
Scotland	20	20	20
% of the relevant September roll with 1+ CSYS @ A-C in S6			
	1996-7	1997-8	1998-9
Castle Douglas HS	13	25	26
Dumfries & Galloway	14	13	13
Scotland	10	9	10

School attendance, too, gives little cause for alarm although we must still work hard to achieve our target.

School Attendance			
Target measure	Absence recorded 1997-7 Average no. of $\frac{1}{2}$ days per pupil	Absence recorded 1998-9 Average no. of $\frac{1}{2}$ days per pupil	Absence target 2000-1 Average no. of $\frac{1}{2}$ days per pupil
Castle Douglas HS	23	24	22
Dumfries & Galloway	30	29	26
Scotland	43	42	36

Looking at the destinations of our 1998-99 leavers, should our congratulations to pupils entering university be shaded by concerns about graduate unemployment and, more common now, underemployment?

School Leavers' Destinations by % of leaver population 1998-99						
	Full-time higher education	Full-time further education	Training	Employment	Other known	Not known
Castle Douglas HS	53	16	15	9	6	1
Dumfries & Galloway	31	21	10	22	11	5
Scotland	31	18	8	26	14	3

Facing up to challenges

If we are to do our best for pupils and maintain and build on our successes, we have to be able to acknowledge areas which need action. One of the challenges we have faced is maintaining pupils' learning rigour in our now more diverse 6th year. To do this we have divided the year into two. One group follows a full school timetable, pressing ahead for qualifications needed to follow their chosen post-school courses. The other group, mainly already qualified for their post-school programmes such as University, contracts into a 20 hour school programme and spend the rest of their time in work and other planned experiences. In this way we can be more confident that all our sixth formers are purposefully occupied.

We have a firmly implemented anti-bullying policy. *'They're quite strict on bullying, so nobody's bullied much at all, 'cos it gets sorted out early', (S1 pupil).* Smoking is a worry and we have an on-going anti-smoking campaign. We believe that the school's positive and work-orientated ethos, along with our guidance 'early warning' system, helps keep most pupils on track. Nonetheless, we had 120 pupil days of exclusion last session and 84 to date in this session, albeit in relation only to five or six pupils out of our 563. We are concerned, however, that *all* our pupils remain engaged with learning and with the school. *'There is a small group of pupils who feel disenchanting or isolated within the school - and it's a very small number - surely there must be something we can do to include them more in the life of the school?'* (Teacher in discussion). We are pleased, therefore, the

SEED Excellence Fund has enabled us to employ a seconded Assistant Head Teacher for thirteen months who will develop our school's policy and positive approaches to behaviour. This AHT will also be responsible for undertaking a review of assessment, teaching and learning, especially in S1 and S2. Are our current subject divisions the basis of our subsequent successes in Standard Grade or would the recommended 5-14 groupings be as, or more, successful?

Our 1950s and 1960s style buildings are inflexible and unattractive. In order to optimise space for classes, both pupils and staff have fared less well in terms of storage space and social meeting places. Staff and pupils alike would welcome better IT facilities and this is now a high priority.

We are confident that our pupils, present and future, have potential which we can enable them and their families to optimise. Present levels of success, however, can only be sustained and developed by all school staff, teaching and ancillary, being of the highest quality and commitment, as they are now. Being a small rural school creates particular problems in retaining excellent staff who may have no prospects of promotion in the foreseeable future. There is a great sense of satisfaction in working in a school which is successful, but it does also bring pressures.

Chapter 9

St. Ninian's High School

School Facts



St. Ninian's High School
Bellfield Road
Kirkintilloch
G66 1DT
East Dunbartonshire
Tel: 0141 776 1585
Fax: 0141 777 8123

Headteacher

Tony Conroy

Length of time in post

4 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

683

Staff numbers (FTE)

52

Location/catchment area

Suburban village; mix of private and local authority housing

Physical environment

Two main buildings (built in 1926 and 1971) and 2 sets of huts

% of pupils entitled to free meals

11%



Background

St. Ninian's High School is a six - year comprehensive school serving the town of Kirkintilloch and the surrounding area, including Lenzie and the villages of Lennoxton and Twechar. The school comprises two main buildings and two sets of huts. The original building was opened in 1926, the second in 1971.

The school has a capacity of 1200 and the current roll is 683. The catchment area includes a mixture of private and local authority housing. We take pupils from 4 partner primary schools. In our aims, we highlight the importance of the individual.

Features of the school

Parents, visitors and temporary teachers often comment on the friendly welcoming atmosphere and we pride ourselves on showing concern for all the members of our community.

When the school received an **Investors in People** award, one of the assessors commented:

'All staff interviewed were keenly aware of the school's aim of providing the best possible education, in its broadest sense, for pupils and there is a positive air in the school to support this.'

Special mention was made of the Senior Management Team in a recent Local Authority report on the school:

'Their modesty prevents them from commenting on the fact that, in their leadership, they demonstrate a profound belief in what they do and in what they are trying to achieve, they engender a respect for each other which is shared throughout the school and which creates a culture of cohesion, unity and loyalty.'

While it is not possible to say which features of any school contribute to its overall success, in a directly causal relationship, we feel that over the years, some of the strategies and policies we have put in place have undoubtedly contributed to raising attainment throughout the school. Among the most significant are:

- ◆ Primary Secondary Liaison
- ◆ Partnership with parents
- ◆ Maximising Potential
- ◆ Promoting Positive Behaviour
- ◆ Reach for the Stars
- ◆ Celebration of success
- ◆ Individualised Education Programmes
- ◆ Mentoring
- ◆ Staff Development

Primary/secondary liaison

Considerable effort is made by the Head Teacher, the 5 – 14 co-ordinator and the Principal Teachers to fully involve the associated primary schools in the life and work of St Ninian's. The mission statement of all schools in the cluster group is the same. Good links have been established over the years, with regular meetings of both class teachers and senior management teams. Joint in-service programmes are planned for at least one in-service day each session. Members of staff in St Ninian's work closely with their primary colleagues, offering appropriate materials and consulting them on a wide range of issues. Each year the Headteacher prepares a grid for each primary showing each of their former pupils' SQA performance and asking for reactions and comments.

Partnership with parents

We work in partnership with parents to provide an ethos which promotes the self esteem of every individual by recognizing their dignity and worth. To keep parents informed and to elicit their views on what is happening in the school, a school newsletter is sent to parents every six weeks. In addition, parents whose children have been identified as unlikely to attend formal examinations are notified by letter of the dates of the exams. On the day of the examination, a member of staff will alert the parents by telephone if the pupil fails to arrive on time. Parent representatives play a pro-active role in the life of the school. We are especially pleased to have parental representation on our School Development Planning Group and our Assessment and Reporting Team. The value of the parental contribution to these groups is threefold:

- ◆ The parents bring a non-specialist approach to the groups, often asking questions and challenging the accepted norms.
- ◆ They view processes and documentation from a parental standpoint and are able to offer suggestions for improved understanding by parents, including the 'de-jargonisation' of our documents!
- ◆ The wider parent body more readily accept developments and changes in which their representatives have been actively involved.

Maximising potential

All S5 pupils are required to follow a full timetable. Senior pupils negotiate their programme of study in consultation with their guidance teacher. They are actively encouraged to maximize their potential by tackling a rigorous and demanding programme commensurate with their ability. Students are required to follow a mandatory English course in S5, but Mathematics is optional. English, Maths and French are spread across several columns to facilitate progression from Standard Grade and to maximize potential.

In S6 students must make a commitment to a minimum of four courses in consultation with their guidance teacher. In addition, students are expected to participate in the school's community involvement programme which features a range of activities, including paired reading and peer tutoring.

All programmes of study are monitored by the Depute Head, who responds flexibly to individual pupils' needs.

Promoting positive behaviour

Some four years ago, we decided to review our discipline system. We realized that our old system dealt only with indiscipline, that sanctions were not effective and that we should be trying to reward achievement and good behaviour. The following summary encapsulates our approach:

School objective

- ◆ To raise standards
- ◆ Staff needs identified
- ◆ Support for staff in reviewing Learning and Teaching
- ◆ Raising awareness among staff of alternative approaches to improving pupil motivation and behaviour

Action

- ◆ Staff Development Co-ordinator trained as trainer to deliver a Promoting Positive Behaviour package
- ◆ In-service for all staff
- ◆ Two other members trained to deliver the package
- ◆ Sessions held for groups of staff
- ◆ Rewards team set up
- ◆ 'Reach for the Stars' piloted
- ◆ Prizegiving established
- ◆ All staff involved in a review of the discipline system

Evaluation

- ◆ Monitoring by SMT of approaches used in the classroom
- ◆ Evaluation by staff and pupils of 'Reach for the Stars'
- ◆ Evaluation of prizegiving
- ◆ Evaluation of exam results

We believe that there is now a tangible difference in atmosphere and that this positive culture has resulted in improvements in behaviour and in improvements in results in external examinations.

Celebration of success

In addition to the regular newsletter, the school celebrates success in many ways.

- ◆ Pre-conceived notions about the value of success are publicly dispelled and positive attitudes encouraged.
- ◆ In support of research findings concerning boys' response to praise, the Head Teacher uses a great deal of factual data.
- ◆ The work and successes of non-stereotypical departments are stressed.
- ◆ Examination results are shared with all pupils from S1-S6.
- ◆ The Head has adopted a highly successful praise system for staff in the light of the pupils' examination success. Individual staff are personally complimented on particular successes of note.
- ◆ Examination success is publicly announced in church on Sundays.
- ◆ At the end of every session an award ceremony for pupils and their parents takes place.

St. Ninian's High School Exam Analysis – By Gender

	% S4 roll 5 @ 1			% S4 roll 5 @ 1-2			% S4 roll 5 @ 1-4			% S4 roll 5 @ 1-6		
	Boys	Girls	Totals	Boys	Girls	Totals	Boys	Girls	Totals	Boys	Girls	Totals
96/97	5	12	9	20	33	27	60	80	71	84	95	89
97/98	17	14	16	38	39	39	73	86	79	91	94	93
98/99	21	25	23	50	50	50	86	91	88	97	97	97

fig. 1

The effect has been a definite and marked improvement in overall attainment and in the attainment of boys in particular (fig. 1).

In 1999 we were especially pleased with our pupils' performance at Standard Grade and recent information from the Audit Unit has confirmed that we are in the top 10% of the country for S Grade awards per pupil, for Credit level awards and for the percentage of pupils gaining 5 + awards at Credit level. In S5, the percentage of the S4 roll who went on to achieve 5 Highers also places us in the top 10% for that category.

now use a range of strategies to praise and motivate pupils. Positive aspects are highlighted and recognition is given to the vast majority of pupils who do attend, who do their homework, who do try their best. It is heartening to see the number of departments who are nominating pupils for individual awards, pupils who in the past would never have received any recognition. The Principal Teachers come along to the ceremonies and present the awards in person. The scheme exemplifies what St Ninian's is about – building a community where the contribution of every individual is recognized and valued.

Reach for the stars

Our praise and reward system 'Reach for the Stars' was born in 1995. At present, we use

- ✓ 'Reach for the Stars' in S1 (fig. 2)
- ✓ 'All Stars' in S2
- ✓ 'Success Makers' in S3 (fig. 3)
- ✓ A Gold Award letter available to all pupils

Our award ceremonies are very lively occasions, with music and games as well as the distribution of rewards. They provide an opportunity for highlighting positive aspects and for encouraging pupils to keep striving for improvement. Recently a team from BBC Newsnight Scotland visited the school to film the Reach for the Stars assembly. The BBC had heard that the boys in St Ninian's had performed as well as the girls in Standard Grade exams, counter to the national trend of boys lagging behind girls in national examinations. The film will be shown in the Spring.

Finding time for the organization of the scheme is a constant problem. Although it has been streamlined, the administration is still a mammoth task for the team. However we feel that 'Reach for the Stars' has had a significant impact on the behaviour and consequently the achievement of our pupils. We believe it contributes to the kind of atmosphere we are trying to create. Many staff

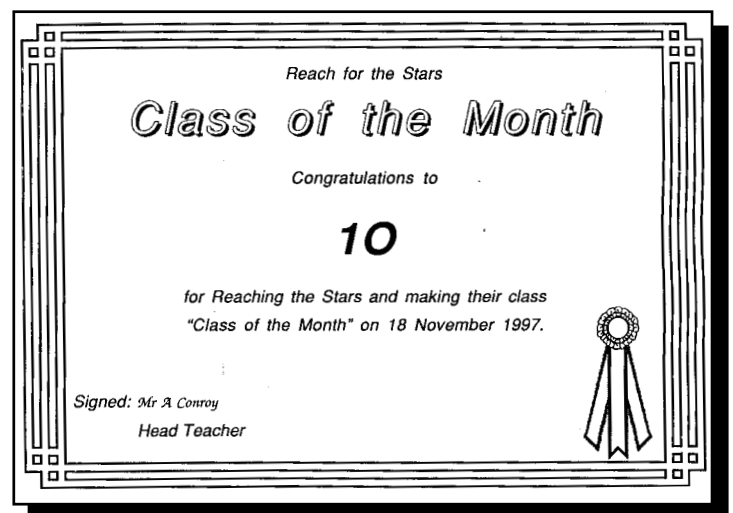




fig. 2










St Ninian's High School
 "S3 Success Makers"
 Award Action Form




Dear Parent/Guardian of pupil's name

(pupil's name) behaviour has been recorded by the different teachers for the following reason(s).

	Attendance		Punctual Arrival		Uniform
	Homework		Bringing Equipment		Attitude to work

Joanna has achieved  stars !!

Year Group Average  stars !!

Please note that these totals show that Joanna's teachers awarded 1.9 % LESS stars during the past 4 weeks than they did in the 4 week block ended 23rd October 1997.

Signed: *Mr A Connay* Date: *9th December 1997*
 Head Teacher

fig. 3

Individualised Education Programmes

The Support for Learning department plays a major role in devising Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for pupils as they enter S1 and as they continue through to S4. This session 35 pupils in S1-S4 have IEPs in English or Maths and as many as 16 have them in both subjects. This allows the pupils to work at their own pace on work that is suited to their individual needs but it also offers teachers advice on the best methods of working with these particular pupils.

Mentoring

Thirty three members of staff have volunteered to each support two students who are considered likely to benefit from a level of support which complements existing support mechanisms. Contact with pupils is largely informal with mentors adopting the role of concerned parents. It is stressed to all mentors that they should feel no obligation to try to solve any problems: rather, by listening to the pupil and by getting to know them well, they are able to direct them to an appropriate source of advice such as Guidance or a member of the Senior Management Team.

Staff development

In January 1997, we received the **Investors in People** award, only the sixth school in Scotland to do so. To achieve this award we were assessed against specific criteria by a national body. This confirmed that staff at all levels are involved in setting priorities, that they are encouraged to be reflective professionals and that facilities are provided for staff to improve their skills. This also reflects our commitment to self evaluation, evident in the production of our School Development Plan. From the start in 1993, the Development Planning process has been characterized by a continual process of target setting and evaluation. Each year we hold an interim review of our progress in December and an annual review in May/June.

We use the Performance Indicators in 'How Good is our School' to take a broad look at our current position. In a recent evaluation, staff indicated that the area most in need of attention was learning and teaching, and this area now features prominently in our School Development Plan. In addition to whole school priorities, we also ask staff to consider their own needs in aspects of teaching and classroom management such as subject content, planning and evaluation, motivating pupils and so on. Promoted staff are asked to add to this their needs across a range of management competencies. All this information is used by the staff development co-ordinator to identify suitable staff development opportunities.

Looking to the future

In March 2000 the school's Charter Mark application was delivered to the Cabinet Office in London and we expect to receive a visit from an assessor in April or May. We hope that the procedures involved in winning the Charter Mark will give us expert feedback on the service we provide. We hope to learn of areas in which we can improve. In short, everything we do in the school is designed to ensure that the focus is on each child as an individual. The school often features in the press, and perhaps a recent quote from an article by William Paul in 'Scotland on Sunday' best sums us up!

'The secret of St Ninian's is, ultimately, that there is no secret. It boils down to sensible leadership, high quality teaching, mutual respect between pupils and staff, the positive involvement of parents and an ethos which encourages, rewards and stretches the bright and not so bright according to their individual needs.'

Chapter 10

Cochrane Castle Primary School

School Facts



Cochrane Castle Primary School
Craigview Avenue
Johnstone
PA5 0JH
Renfrewshire
tel: 01505 320 618
fax: 01505 382 973

Headteacher

Kate Clark

Length of time in post

2.5 years

Type of school

5-11 Primary

Number of pupils

180

Staff numbers (FTE)

11 FTE and 1 Home-School worker

Location/catchment area

Urban, on edge of small town

Physical environment

Brick building erected in 1953

% of pupils entitled to free meals

60%



Background

Cochrane Castle Primary School serves an area of mainly local authority housing which has been designated a Priority Area under the Paisley Partnership because of the extent of multiple deprivation. There is a great deal of local unemployment. The area suffers from being stereotyped and is negatively regarded by the wider community.

When the school was opened in 1953, the roll was over 600. Today it stands at 180. Families from privately owned houses nearby, who are within the catchment area, often apply for a placing request to other schools. This practice affects the social mix of the school and perpetuates the view that the school caters only for children from a priority area. Recently, the school has been linked to two other establishments – the pre-five Family Centre and a nearby denominational primary – to form Renfrewshire's first New Community School.

Raising attainment through Social Competence

Over the past few years, Cochrane Castle has developed a whole school ethos built around the concept of social competence. The approach is child centred and aims to educate the whole child, actively teaching:

- ◆ self awareness
- ◆ emotional competence
- ◆ social problem solving skills

This approach cuts across contexts, underpinning the child's experience in classroom and playground.

First steps – a whole school collaborative approach

A number of years ago, the school initiated a two-fold approach to what were perceived to be endemic behavioural problems on the part of a group of pupils. A **Joint Assessment Team** was set up, to deal with those pupils who presented exceptionally challenging behaviour. Some were placed in special schools for pupils with EBD while others were educated in schools for pupils with Mild Learning Difficulties. Nevertheless, staff felt that the difficulties which a large proportion of the pupils were experiencing in their learning, were in fact contributing to their behavioural problems. To address this issue, a **Learning Support Base** was set up, staffed by a teacher who completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs.

When the Joint Assessment Team and Learning Support Base had been established and were working effectively, the school enlisted the help of the educational psychologist in a collaborative project designed to improve behaviour and raise attainment. As part of her initial research, Dr Kelly observed a number of classroom situations involving a range of behavioural difficulties. After a period of observation in a P6 class which contained a group of 8 pupils who exhibited signs of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), Dr Kelly suggested that a fresh whole school approach might be beneficial. Dr Kelly then worked with the P6 and P7 teachers over a period of two years, studying the various strategies both in a classroom situation and with a selected group of pupils in order to identify those approaches which seemed to offer the greatest prospect of improvement in behaviour across the school. As she explains:

'We selected Circle time as our principal strategy for the following reasons:

- ✓ *It had a therapeutic role.*
- ✓ *It already had an established reputation.*
- ✓ *It had its own rules, chanted each time it was used.*
- ✓ *We could adopt a whole school approach.'*

The staff then agreed to adopt Circle Time as part of a whole school collaborative approach to Personal and Social Development and behaviour management. Teachers

were delighted with the results. Some had been concerned that they might lose the respect of the pupils by becoming involved in Circle Time, but found that this was not the case. Indeed, many of them felt they gained the children's trust and that this has contributed to an improvement in behaviour and raising of achievement across the board.

The pupils' response has been extremely positive. A P5 pupil writes:

'Yesterday we had a special Buddy Circle Time with Primary 2. We have made lots of new young friends. My buddy I gave a present to was Emma. I like Circle Time because it makes me laugh and it makes me feel happy. We gave them a sheet of paper and a picture of me. They had to draw a picture of themselves. They also got a badge that we made for them.'

Reaching out to the community

The new strategy forms the basis for home/school and wider community links. Many of the parents did not have a positive experience of school in their own childhood and as a result, their expectations of their children in academic terms were very low.

In general, they were satisfied with the school if their child did not get into trouble. However, they played little part in the life of the school and contact was often sporadic or unsatisfactory. There was a general dissatisfaction with the system of exclusions as they felt that exclusion from school served no purpose and that the pupils' behaviour did not improve on return to school. As part of its strategy to raise attainment, the school has worked closely with parents in recent years, especially since the appointment of the present Headteacher.

- ◆ Parents are involved in decision making through the School Board and via appropriate questionnaires.
- ◆ They are kept informed of school developments via newsletters, reports, certificates and homework records.
- ◆ They are informed at an early stage if there are concerns about progress in learning, classroom or playground behaviour.
- ◆ They receive a letter from the Headteacher if their child's work or behaviour has shown improvement.
- ◆ They are encouraged to inform the school of any concerns they may have.
- ◆ The Bullyproofing Policy was designed after consultation with pupils, parents and staff.

In terms of more general parental involvement, parents are now regular helpers in class and have a Parents' Room where they can meet and chat over a cup of coffee. One parent writes in the school handbook:

'I can only say that taking part in games with the pupils in class gives you a great feeling that you are helping the children and the teachers. I know when I was at school you were dropped off at the gate and picked up again. I don't think my mum or dad ever spoke to a teacher.'

Links between home and school

The school has an extensive **home visiting programme**, part of a positive strategy to develop home – school links and involve parents more fully in the education of their child. This session staff visited almost all parents of Primary 1 pupils in September to discuss how their child was coping with the transition from nursery to primary school and how, as parents, they can best support their child's learning. The benefits of home visiting include the following:

- ◆ Parents become aware of their contribution as educators.
- ◆ Parents' inhibitions about schools can be reduced.
- ◆ Teaching staff have the opportunity to discuss issues with parents in an informal, relaxed environment.
- ◆ Relationships that foster trust and respect are developed between staff, parents and pupils.

Parents are also appreciative of the role played by Jim Williamson, the school's **home-school link worker**. In addition to performing the tasks usually associated with his post – parental liaison on attendance, helping to promote partnership between home and school – Jim gets to know pupils on an individual basis. For example, he works with them on their responses to provocation, so that they no longer allow others to control how they behave. Jim also works with parents to explain the school's approach to behaviour management and asks for the parents' co-operation. This may come in the form of a reward for the pupil, or monitoring an aspect of a pupil's behaviour at home.

He also works with class teachers to identify patterns of behaviour, so that they can defuse potentially difficult situations. Any pupil who is showing signs of difficulty with behaviour can be removed from class and allowed to explore the problem with one of the core group of teachers involved in the project until he or she can analyse and resolve the problem. Alternatively, one of the teachers might take the time to speak to the pupil regularly throughout the day, defusing potentially difficult situations.

Dealing with difficult behaviour

Although the atmosphere in the school is much improved, leading to a consequential rise in attainment across the board, there are still occasional incidences of challenging behaviour. Very difficult behaviour is dealt with by extraction from class and on-the-spot counseling which targets the child's resolution of the immediate emotions and behaviours presented. The ethos represents a whole school approach with individual staff members developing specific areas of expertise. The Head may gather together all pupils involved in an incident (the apparently innocent with the apparently guilty!) and using advanced Circle Time techniques, she attempts to resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of all concerned. She describes how Circle Time can now be used in crisis situations.

'If there has been an incident in the playground, we can bring all the pupils involved together, and, using the techniques learned in Circle Time, the pupils can resolve the situation and move on. If one child is very angry or aggressive, we can leave the discussion until he or she is calmer. Then we help them to explore their feelings, understand the feelings of others and explore where the situation led to conflict.'

This extended use of Circle Time is only possible now that the pupils have used it in class for a number of years and are familiar with the rules and parameters of the process. Pupils whose behaviour reaches an unacceptable level are consistently encouraged to examine the causes and effects of such behaviour. The pupil is removed from class and counselled by the Head, the Home Link Teacher, the Learning Support teacher or the educational psychologist. The staff have genuine empathy with the pupils' frustration and will try to encourage an understanding of:

- ◆ what the teacher is trying to achieve;
- ◆ how the pupil's behaviour affects the rest of the class;
- ◆ how the pupil's behaviour affects the role of the teacher;
- ◆ how individuals affect the actions of the group.

The pupil is thus given autonomy over his or her own feelings and behaviour, leading to a sense of control and an increase in self esteem. Pupils can then accept the appropriate punishment or sanction. Punishments for misdemeanors may include, after discussion:

- ◆ a verbal or written apology;
- ◆ a reflective piece of writing about the incident;
- ◆ positive working away from class;
- ◆ withdrawal of privileges such as football, use of the common room or withdrawal from the playground.

When the pupils return to class, they are settled and focused and learning can resume. If it is not appropriate for the pupil to return to class he or she is given suitable work to do, so that no time is wasted.

Poor behaviour is not rewarded, but good behaviour is encouraged by target sheets, points and positive comments (fig. 1 & 2).

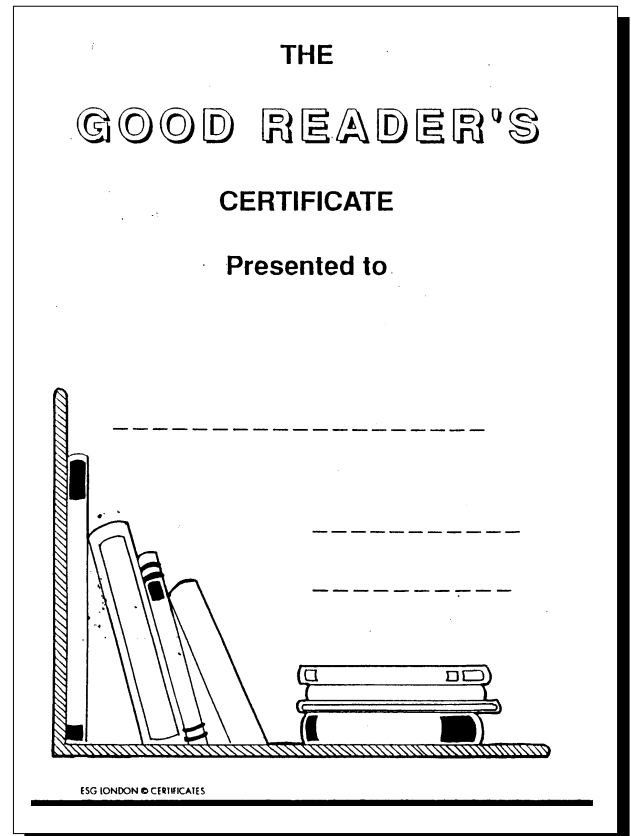


fig. 1

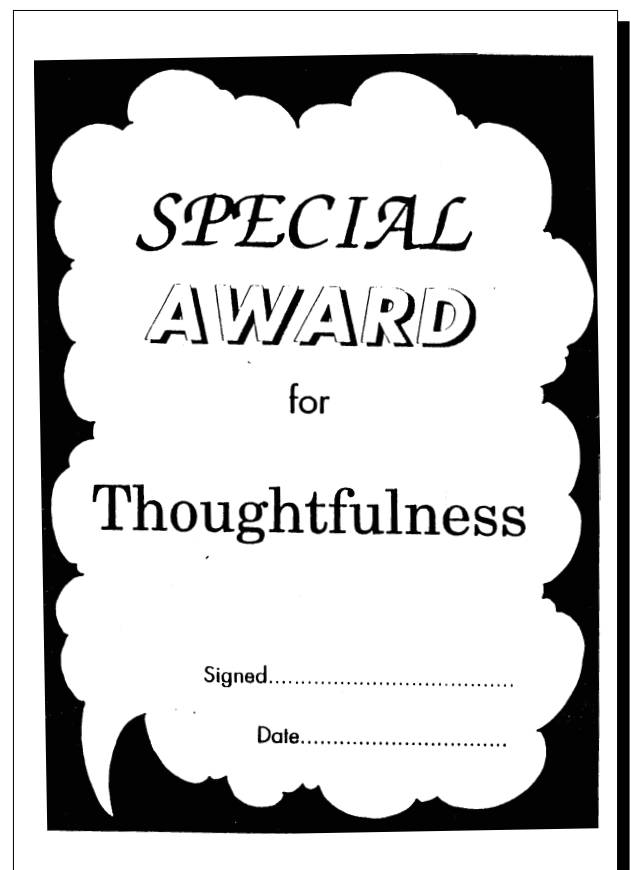


fig. 2

'We've got to the point where pupils understand why they are out of class. We will help them resolve the situation immediately, so that resentment does not build up and the pupil can return to normal working as soon as possible. The focus is on the whole child,' says Fay Potts, the Learning Support teacher. 'Most of our pupils' behavioural difficulties stem from their frustration. We try to address each individual child's learning needs, while working on their behaviour at the same time.'

Dr Kelly believes that when staff accept responsibility for the whole child, progress can be made. In return, there is a genuine commitment on the part of all staff that teachers will be supported when a difficult situation arises. There is a clear understanding among staff that sending a pupil home for misbehaviour should be seen as a last resort.

Staff development

The introduction and success of the present strategies have depended heavily on focused and appropriate staff development. In addition to working on Circle Time, staff have attended courses on the implications of modern research on the workings of the brain and the links between learning and emotional intelligence

Evaluation of the project

This approach needs time, patience and training, but staff believe it is worthwhile.

The school's results in National Tests show a marked improvement:

Target Measure *	June '98	June '99	(Target) June 2001
Reading	22%	41%	51%
Writing	–	33%	40%
Maths	21%	43%	50%

* % of P3,4,6 & 7 attaining or exceeding minimum 5-14 levels for their stage.

Not only have exclusions been reduced, but the school has maintained a record of no exclusions for over a year.

Number of half day exclusions

1995 – 1996	264
1996 – 1997	163
1997 – 1998	236
1998 – 1999	6
1999 – to date	0

In addition, parents are more closely involved in the work of the school and staff report a calmer atmosphere.

Next steps

A current project is under way on implementing and monitoring the PATHS curriculum, a formal intervention programme addressing emotional intelligence. Dr Kelly is now working on an extension of previous strategies, this time looking at pupils' emotional development. She has compiled a profile for each of a small number of pupils, looking at their behaviour and feelings in different areas. She will monitor their progress over the next 18 months and train staff in techniques that will help pupils overcome their behavioural problems and allow them to concentrate on their progress in class.

'One of the main themes that emerged when we looked at the profiles was response to provocation,' says Dr Kelly, 'and we may use this as a starting point to see whether pupils can learn to control their behaviour by working on their emotional development.'

And finally

A former member of staff who visited the school after an absence of 6 years commented on how calm the school was and how relaxed the pupils and teachers were. One of the present staff responded that although there are still incidents and behavioural problems, teachers and pupils know that there is support available and a well defined strategy in place to help them through any difficult situations that arise.

Chapter 11

Kingussie High School

School Facts



Kingussie High School
Ruthven Road
Kingussie
PH21 1ES
Highlands
Tel: 01540 661 475
Fax: 01540 661 123

Headteacher

Dr Tom Taylor

Length of time in post

10 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

405

Staff numbers (FTE)

36.7 FTE

Location/catchment area

On edge of Kingussie village, beside the River Spey and looking across to the Cairngorms.

Physical environment

Typical 1970 building

% of pupils entitled to free meals

6%



Background

The school population is stable although there is a variable small degree of balanced emigration and immigration to and from all parts of the U.K. and other European countries. The school catchment area is very large – in length virtually between the passes of Slochd and Drumochter and extending for some distance on either side of the Highland arterial road, the A9. It includes the very different communities of Dalwhinnie, Laggan, Newtonmore, Kingussie, Kincaig and Aviemore. Over 40% of our pupils come from Aviemore whose population is particularly subject to emigration/immigration involving families from the Central Belt of Scotland. The school has 6 associated primaries of widely varying size and situation. A close link (electronic, pedagogical and social) with a school in the Rheinlandpfalz is part of a continued European and technological emphasis in the school. Our staffing situation is very stable indeed.

Context of achievement

Like many schools, we take the view that pupil achievement in its widest sense is a product of the whole-school ethos and environment. The blueprint for this is laid down in our school aims. These in turn reflect the views of all 3 constituencies of the whole school community. They are well debated, refined and real, and as follows:

- 1 To maintain a friendly atmosphere which merges the diversities of our local area and which encourages mutual respect, tolerance, co-operation, and an appreciation of positive human values.
- 2 To promote diligence and provide the maximum opportunity for the talents of all pupils to be identified and developed through a range of learning experiences.
- 3 To foster an appreciation of our unique environment and traditions and also to engender in our pupils a confidence and a sense of responsibility in dealing with the wider community – local, national and international – and in preparing for life and work in society at large.
- 4 To maintain good communication within the school, with parents, and with the local community.
- 5 To sustain a philosophy of continuous consultative development where all school arrangements are openly assessed and the contributions and aspirations of all are recognised.

These aims set out the context in which we view achievement as a process of maximising the talents of, and opportunities open to, all pupils by a process of positive recognition and encouragement.

What constitutes achievement?

We take the view that any improvement in any aspect of any curricular (including homework), extra-curricular or behavioural factors represents achievement.

How is it recognised and encouraged?

Commendation System

Like most schools we have a system for recognising achievement – a weekly issue of 'Commendations', special gold A5 certificates with a green variant for individuals who are members of a commended group (fig. 1). Commendation winners or groups have their names posted weekly on a Commendation Board in the main hall/dining area. When this was being set up, several members of our parents' organisations asked, from experience elsewhere, that we avoid 'inflation' which

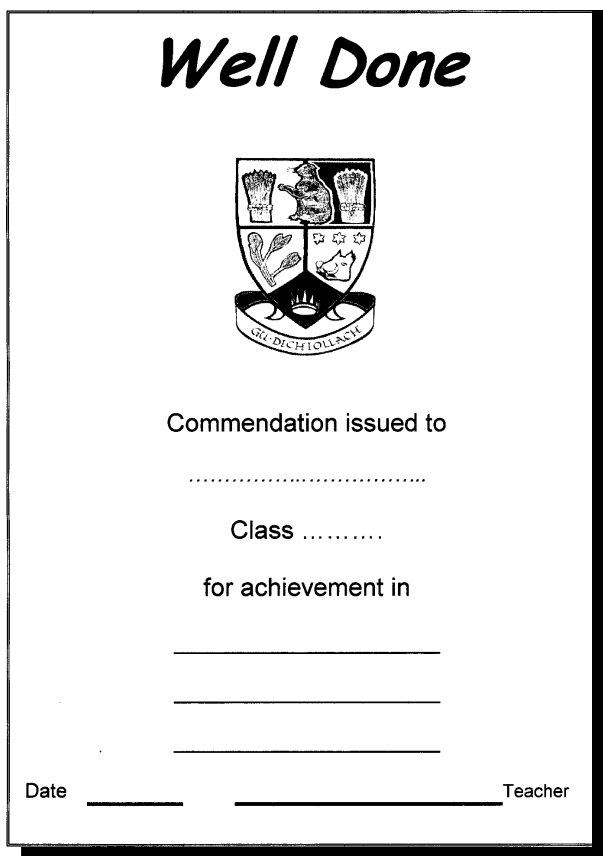


fig. 1

Visual Pupil Creations

We highlight pupils' creative work wherever possible – e.g. paintings are on display throughout the school and photographs of excursions or activities are displayed as we approach our annual prizegiving. In addition pupils themselves have improved their own environment by planting trees and by involvement with the Beechgrove Garden team in a major school grounds improvement project.

Music

A very large proportion of our pupils participate in the school Orchestra and in our Folk Group. This is almost certainly helped by a local area Music Festival – a week long annual event in our school involving all local primaries and many adults. Public performances by the Orchestra and Folk Group at school concerts, assemblies, and at public events locally and in Inverness inevitably build up pupil sense of worth and achievement. In recent years, the Orchestra toured the Veneto, performing in several towns, while the Folk Group made a commercially successful recording, as well as winning a major national award at a UK folk festival in London.

Clubs and Sports

Members of staff have been very kind in volunteering their services for pupils – over twenty clubs and sports have been consistently available – mostly at lunchtime given the need for transport home after school. This traditional building of good relationships between staff and pupils also of course allows pupils to achieve in several areas. In many ways new skills gained through an activity or successes in rugby or shinty, hockey, football or ski-ing are as important to the individual pupils as achieving five good Highers. And of course it is intended that the inclusion of some less focussed pupils in such school activities, together with the simultaneous raising of their self esteem, spills over into academic attainment.

Achievement through Education Industry Links

A pupil who finds his/her metier in the adult environment comes back with increased motivation. All S4 undertake Work Experience as do a good number of S5/6. Annual 'Problem Solving' courses in the school for all S2 pupils led by representatives of local businesses and organisations injects a sense of achievement in many pupils – as does the annual two day 'Understanding Industry' course for S6 with its highly focussed role-playing. 'Young Enterprise' builds confidence too.

Use of Praise

Over the past two years all of us in school have made a conscious effort to increase the use of praise. Over the past two years this has also been built upon by the staff advisory committee.

would devalue the system. Staff therefore work to a very loose guideline of issuing the equivalent of one per fortnight – averaged over the year – but without this inhibiting recognition of outstanding work for a given pupil. Actual ability is irrelevant to the process – it is especial effort which is recognised irrespective of ability. Experience shows all pupils of all abilities are recognised, and monitoring/feedback of data on commendations cumulated by year group, by sex etc, reinforces and regulates the process.

Circular, Newspaper, Website

All pupil successes in extra-curricular activities, competitions etc are recognised immediately in the daily Circular, in 'School Notes' in the local weekly newspaper, in regular Parental Newsletters, and on our Website (<http://members.aol.com/kingussieh/index.htm>). In addition to replicating the newspaper notes the website also has an expanding and cumulative list of 'Pupils' Notable Achievements'.

Assemblies

When individual pupils do anything of interest they are asked (and most agree) to speak at our monthly Assemblies. Thus pupils may relate (maximum 2 minutes) their experiences in winning a major competition, or visiting the Opening of the Scottish Parliament, or being part of a band touring Canada, or telling how a group is pioneering girls' shinty. Their is double value to the presenting pupils' self-esteem and confidence. It reinforces the general pupil perception of 'it's cool to achieve'.

Origins

The basic ethos does not arise from conscious planning. It arises because of long-held shared belief among all of us in developing the whole pupil. The organisers of clubs and activities do so because they want to as individuals and have a belief in the worth of their contribution. Newer aspects such as the Commendation System and increased use of praise derive from planned, focused development. This involved all staff in taking forward in cross-curricular groups, the recommendations of a cross-curricular working party. Visits to other schools were useful. The chairman of the working party (P.T. Maths) was able to draw particularly on the valuable practical experience of visiting Inverness Royal Academy.

All developments in the school has been informed by a system of quinquennial reviews. The views of pupils, parents and staff are thoroughly and systematically evaluated against a series of questions embracing national questionnaires, PIs, School Aims and matters of local interest. The outcome of these, backed up by triennial reviews of all school policies automatically inform the School Development Plan in a manner which reflects the views of staff and parents of the School Board and Association. To give a very practical example, concern regarding toilets – their condition and pupils' smoking and congregating in them – was picked up and given a high priority among several other items. After further discussion with pupils (School Forum), parents (School Board and School Association) and staff, this was comprehensively addressed at a cost of several thousand pounds.

School Structures

We believe that much of a school's ethos comes from the quality of relationships within the school community: pupil-pupil; pupil-teacher; teacher-teacher; teacher-parent; and of course the crucial pupil-parent relationships. We do try in difficult (disciplinary or otherwise) situations to work closely with other agencies (Health, Social Work, Psychological Service, Police) whenever possible. The Depute Rector's Pupil Support remit covers Discipline, Guidance, Learning Support and relating to the outside agencies.

We try to be a welcoming school and have a well developed 'Buddy' system (S6/S1). Even before Primary 7 pupils arrive, they are part of a relatively extensive Primary/Secondary induction process. This starts with visits to Primary 7 classes by the Rector, a School Captain and an S1 pupil previously from the Primary concerned. Guidance and Learning Support visit frequently before transfer. Pupils from Primary 7 spend a day in the High School each June following their timetable. Their parents come the next day, tour the school with pupil guides and meet all staff informally over tea.

Other relationships are constantly "worked at" positively and consciously in a large variety of ways – socially being the most important. Formal structures also encourage consultation. Department Meetings (attended by SMT member), Parents' Meetings, Heads of Department and Staff Meetings, School Association, School Board are typical of many schools. In addition a School Forum comprising the elected Captains of all 20 Register classes S1 – 5 plus the elected 4 School Captains from S6 meet biannually with the Rector to discuss items of mutual interest or concern raised by any member. These meetings are supplemented by weekly discussions over tea and biscuits involving all four S6 captains, the Assistant Rector and the Rector. An elected Staff Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Board of Studies (SMT) in School Development Planning, Staff Development, Staff Development and Review, Monitoring the Quality of Learning and Teaching, and also is kept fully aware of overall school DSM finance. All policies, whether they arise from a staff Working Party or the SMT are subject to Departmental consultation before being finalised by the Board of Studies.

Individual Pupil Support

As in many schools, we have an S6 'Buddy' system for S1 pupils and a Register class teacher taking his/her class from S1 through to S6. Each register class is in one of 4 Guidance Houses. Apart from scheduled meetings the Guidance staff meet frequently, often daily, before or after school to share information.

The weekly Commendation system is paralleled by a weekly 'Cause for Concern' system where any unexpected decline in pupil performance in classes is passed to Guidance for internal action or consultation with parents as appropriate. Like 'Commendations', 'Cause for Concern' is a standing item at all weekly Departmental meetings.

Guidance and Learning Support liaise routinely and share the same line manager – the Depute Rector, whose Pupil Support remit as mentioned extends also to external support agencies and whose disciplinary remit and responses are also often informed by the whole-pupil perspective gained.

Learning Support work to a policy of inclusion of pupils in mainstream wherever possible and whatever the difficulty, including Downs Syndrome and pupils on the autistic spectrum.

Pupil tracking and goal setting

We are also trialling a Log Book for S5/6 Higher Still students. These are kept by the students and have 3 functions:

- ◆ they act as a vehicle whereby pupils collect data to inform the Guidance S5/6 Monitoring of Pupil progress early in S5/6;
- ◆ they are a means of informing parents, continuously, of pupil progress;
- ◆ they are a means of pupils taking responsibility for their own lessons and setting their own targets – within subjects and across the board (in discussion with Guidance staff).

Evidence of effect

Major changes in moving from a severe problem to an outstanding success, are easy to measure. Such prosaic changes as the toilet renovations mentioned above can readily be measured in the total absence of complaints from pupils, parents and staff. However in areas of operation where no major problem exists, be it behavioural, concerning attendance, or in examination results, any improvements are inevitably small and are masked by the wide natural variation in year groups in a school of our size.

For example the key examination indicators shown in the table below demonstrate significant increases in Standard Grade passes at levels 1 and 2. This could be taken as one source of evidence of positive change, but can equally be regarded as part of the natural cycle or variation of ability in year groups. The Higher results remain stable but are subject to staying on rates which, as well as reflecting variations in ability, to some extent reflects our dual season tourist economy. In a similar way the effect of a positive ethos of achievement, such as that on attendance, may well be masked by the fact that other strategies towards reducing absence are simultaneously in play, and are also influenced by natural variation.

Variable	96-97	97-98	98-99
%S4 roll gaining 5+ Standard Grades at 1-2	27	39	47
%S4 roll gaining 3+ Higher Grades at A-C in S5	26	24	27
Average number of half days absence per pupil	29	24	21

However, we have noticed in recent years an increasingly positive approach by pupils in general coupled with a decline in discipline referrals at all levels. There are pockets of disciplinary difficulties but they tend to centre on particular pupils with particular problems – often of a identifiable psychological origin.

In the same way where we might have had one senior pupil volunteering several years ago for courses such as Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (a kind of 'outward-bound' training), we now have eight. Similarly 'Buddies' in S6 now in general are more willing to take more responsibility.

What now?

- ◆ Our Senior Student Log-book needs now to be refined in the light of the actual experience of 'Higher Still' – and perhaps it can be married more closely with the evolving Higher Still recording/reporting system which we adopted based on a Grangemouth High School model.
- ◆ Our 'Buddy' system can be taken still further.
- ◆ The elements of pupil tracking currently operating on a whole-school basis and being developed on a 'micro-level' in some departments can be taken further - possibly making use of the computers we now have in every classroom. Study support systems - and tutored classes after school, present in embryonic form, can be taken further.
- ◆ We must surely, however, take care never to lose in a network of useful 'systems' the foundation of all our structures – the relationships between all parties in the school community.

Chapter 12

St. Modan's High School

School Facts



St. Modan's High School
Barnsdale Road
Stirling
FK7 0PA
Tel: 01786 470 962
Fax: 01786 447 117

Headteacher

Frank Lennon

Length of time in post

3 years

Type of school

11-18 Comprehensive

Number of pupils

849

Staff numbers (FTE)

62

Location/catchment area

A wide catchment area, with pupils from 3 local authorities

Physical environment

3 buildings – a 1930's stone building and 2 brick built extensions

% of pupils entitled to free meals

18%



Background

St. Modan's High School is a Catholic secondary school situated in the St Ninian's area of Stirling. It was opened in 1933. Prior to the reform of local government in 1996 St Modan's catchment area covered a large part of Central Region. The re-organisation of local government which split Central Region into three authorities, also divided the school's catchment area in three. Thus the school has found itself in the unique position of having associated primary schools in three different local authorities: Clackmannan, Falkirk and Stirling. In fact, though Stirling is the 'host' authority, fewer than half our pupils live in the Stirling Council area.

School aims

In our school aims we state the following:

"...we are committed to the education of the whole person - spiritual, intellectual, social, moral and physicalWe aim to demonstrate this commitment by creating a community of faith and learning in which: Christian values such as love and tolerance permeate all our policies, actions and interactions; the needs of each pupil are at the centre of everything we do; every member of our community - pupils, staff, parents and visitors - is treated with the same dignity and respect; there is a culture of high expectations and praise to promote the best possible conditions for learning and teaching; all our young people have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to maximise their full potential to succeed and to grow in wisdom and in grace."

Achievement therefore is seen within a **framework of values** as relating to the development of the **whole person**.

Raising attainment

The Headteacher takes a long term inclusive view of raising attainment and felt that the school should look at the overall picture to identify whole school approaches that would encourage all pupils to achieve their potential rather than target specific groups.

Action has been taken on a number of issues, and whilst it would be impossible to attribute success to any one strategy, the overall outcome has been a considerable improvement in results (fig. 1).

Following on from a record year in 1998 at Standard Grade, 1998-99 was always going to be a challenging year for us not least because the 1999 results would be the first to contribute towards the targets we have been set over the next three years. We were therefore delighted that our results for 1999 achieved every one of the Government's targets at both Standard Grade and Higher in this the first year of the three year cycle. We were particularly pleased to see an increase from the 27% average to 43% of our S4 gaining 5+ Standard Grades at 1-2 representing a 59% improvement in two years. We were also pleased to see that the percentage of pupils gaining no award at Standard Grade has been reduced from 13% to only 2% in English and to only 4% in Maths. The following are among the strategies which we have identified as crucial in raising attainment:

Targets & Results					
All figures are given as a % of S4 roll					
Area of Target	Average of 95, 96, 97	Target 1999-2001	1998	1999	Target Met?
SG English @ 1-6	87	91	97	98	Yes
SG Maths @ 1-6	87	92 @ 1-6	98	96	Yes
5+ SG @ 1-6	84	91	96	96	Yes
5+ SG @ 1-4	69	75	81	81	Yes
5+ SG @ 1-2	27	31	39	43	Yes
3+ HG @ A-C	22	23	21	25	Yes
5+ HG @ A-C	7	8	5	11	Yes

fig. 1

Action on attendance

Every effort is made to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. Departments are asked to monitor closely attendance at classes and at examinations and report back to the Senior Management Team when there is an issue that requires attention. It may be that an individual or group of pupils requires additional support from the Pupil Support Department. Attendance has now improved, with the average number of half days absence per pupil dropping from 45 in 1997-1998 to 36 in 1998-1999.

Raising expectations

In some cases pupils were underachieving because their expectations were too low. They lacked the confidence to tackle Credit work at Standard Grade or to attempt Higher work in S5 and 6. Now a concerted effort is made to encourage all pupils to tackle more challenging courses, with the proviso that they can move down a class if they are experiencing insurmountable difficulties. The result of this approach is that pupils' aspirations are higher overall. Senior pupils are asked to take a full set of courses and to attend for a full week. This has encouraged many of them to take a more serious approach to their work, with a resultant gain in SQA results.

We also keep parents fully informed of their children's progress. Every year we provide a statistical analysis of the likelihood of converting Standard Grades to Highers. We analyse every pupil's performance at Standard Grade and recommend suitable levels of study. We find that this can be helpful in assisting pupils to make appropriate choices in the senior school.

At year group assemblies for S3 and S4, the head stresses the need for regular homework to be handed in and encourages the wearing of school uniform, very much seen as part of the overall ethos of achievement. There are regular spot checks for pupils who have not done their homework. The resulting visit to the Head's office usually results in an immediate improvement!

Class organization

In the past, departments often set pupils at the beginning of S3. We began to realize that even this might be preventing pupils from achieving their full potential. Departments are now asked to 'broad band' rather than 'set' pupils. This avoids early stereotyping and allows pupils to access an appropriate curriculum without the need to change sections mid-stream.

Staff development in learning and teaching

The process leading to the establishment of a Learning and Teaching Policy for the whole school was begun with a focus on Support for Learning within the school. A 'customised' (voluntary) Module for staff was established in partnership with Glasgow University, linked to the School Development Plan's Learning and Teaching priority. Nearly one third of the staff completed the Module entitled 'Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century'.

A comprehensive Staff Development Programme took place including cross-curricular in-school in-service provided by school staff as well as courses delivered by other providers, Award Bearing Courses in Guidance and ATQs. Training was also provided for support staff including the training of an additional First Aider.

We set up a comprehensive structure of consultative committees on Development Planning; Reporting, Pupil Support, Library ICT & Resources, Finance, Staff Development, Chaplaincy, Health, Safety & Security, Staff Welfare (SMILE!).

A collaborative approach to pastoral care

We have now consolidated the establishment of a radically new way of structuring support for pupils through the Pupil Support Department. This department is composed of the following staff under the overall management of the DHT:

- ✓ Guidance staff
- ✓ Support for Learning specialists
- ✓ Senior Teachers

Thus there are 4 PTs and 9 APTs and Senior Teachers involved - a total of 13 staff covering 9 subject areas. Client groups are structured horizontally, typically in 2 or 3 registration class groups. This means that Pupil Support staff can visit their client groups every morning. Pupil Support staff also play a leading role in assemblies every morning.

In Personal and Social Education (PSE) a full audit of our PSE provision was completed by our Pupil Support Department in 97-98. This was used to plan our future provision and a new model of PSE was implemented.

Partnership with parents, parishes, industry and the local community

Although St Modan's community is now spread across three authorities, links are particularly strong. We have a very active School Board with parental representation from every part of our catchment area. The chair of the School Board is on our School Development Planning Team. Our School Board has two staff members and a Church Representative. Similarly active is our PTA with 15 - 20 parents and staff in regular attendance. The Church Representative on the Children's Committee also attends meetings of these two bodies. The current Church Representative is also a member of the local Community Council and this link has helped ensure that we are responsive to our local community. We continue to have very close links with our Parishes through our Chaplaincy Team. When we needed venues for our Supported Study classes in Alloa, Tullibody and Denny - local parish priests immediately offered the use of their Parish Halls (free of charge!). We stage a special Carol Concert in St Mungo's Church in Alloa each year at which our three school choirs, school orchestra, Senior Singing group 'Cantabile' and a host of soloists perform. We have developed a link with Kildean Special School with some of our S3 / 4 pupils visiting Kildean and helping with their Fun Day in June. Some of our S5 students were involved in a Scottish Power training initiative.

Following on from suggestions made at the Pupil Councils, a group of S3 boys was formed to re-design the boys' toilets in a scheme supported by the Construction Industry Training Board and Falkirk College. The resulting designs will form the basis of the architect drawings for the refurbishment of the toilets which we hope to have complete in the coming session.

Primary secondary liaison

A new Senior Teacher curricular remit was established to help progress our 5-14 & Primary Liaison Priorities. Now, under our new programme, P6 pupils visit for 9 week blocks of ICT, Science and HE, while P7 pupils visit for 4 week blocks of ICT and French.

In English, all P7 classes use a common unit, while we continue our close links in Maths. In addition P7 pupils join St Modan's pupils for Supported Study classes. We run special Information Evenings for parents of our P6 and P7 in each of our partner primary schools linking with our Liaison Programme of weekly visits to St Modan's by P6 and P7 pupils. An Open Morning for P7 parents is held each June. A Primary Liaison Policy statement was agreed with our partner primary schools based on the developments of the last three years. We have a Joint School Board which is composed of representatives from each school board in our cluster.

Raising achievement in S1 and S2

As pupils progress from P7 to S2, we are keen to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently differentiated to cater for pupils' individual needs. We have adopted a number of approaches which we believe to be of assistance in achieving our aims.

- ◆ Differentiation of courses continued in all curricular areas.
- ◆ Literacy and Numeracy were targeted and the timetabling of all S1 and S2 classes in English and Maths was reviewed.
- ◆ Baseline information was established in S1 and S2 using levels of attainment in Edinburgh Reading Tests for improved systematic monitoring of reading development.

We are particularly keen to avoid fragmentation of the curriculum and have adopted a team approach where possible, reaching agreement on a team approach to the delivery of ICT from P6 to S2. Computing, Business Education and Technical Departments now work together on an agreed curriculum using our new ICT network. Similarly, Social Subjects in S1 and S2 are now delivered as a single course, rather than as three discrete subjects.

Local democracy and participation

Our pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of local organizations. Two of our pupils were part of Stirling Council's Student Forum and another was Stirling's representative on the Scottish Youth Millennium Committee. We also offer a wide range of extra curricular activities with over 80% of staff involved outwith the normal school day. In addition to our wide range of sports activities, including our girls' football teams, pupils also enjoy:

- ✓ Debating & Public Speaking Club
- ✓ Junior Boys Choir
- ✓ Junior Girls' Choir
- ✓ Senior Choir
- ✓ 'Cantabile' – Senior Vocal Group
- ✓ Fiddle Group
- ✓ French Exchange Trip & Reciprocal Hosting
- ✓ Holland Trips – October and July
- ✓ PTA Family Ceilidh
- ✓ Scots Song Competition
- ✓ PTA Burns Supper – over 40 pupils participated
- ✓ Junior Debating Competition
- ✓ S6 Valedictory Dinner
- ✓ New S6 Retreat at Tomintoul
- ✓ Traidcraft Group – Fair Trading for the Third World

We are very proud of our school's participation in a number of local and national events. Individual pupils, groups and teams have enjoyed success across a wide range of activities.

Scotland's Health At Work Award

Our SMILE (St Modan's Initiative for Lifestyle Enhancement) Group of staff have been working to promote healthy lifestyles within the school. One of the events saw 40 women from the school community take part in the Race for Life at Stirling University in May 1999. In doing so they raised £1400 for cancer charities. We have been presented with the Bronze Award of the Scotland's Health at Work Scheme and are currently going for silver!

Individual and team success

One of our senior teams reached the final of the RSSPA Public Speaking Championship. Another of our senior teams won the Central FM Public Speaking Competition for the third time in four years.

In football, our 13s team won the District Cup, our 14s team were runners-up in their Cup competition and our 12s team reached their Cup Semi-Final.

One of our S5 girls became a Scottish Champion when she won the Scottish Irish Dancing Championships in her year group.

Three of our pupils qualified for the Scottish Schools Swimming Championship.

BBC 2 broadcast a significant part of our PTA Burns Supper in the Gordon Brewer documentary 'A Nation Again' and several pupils from S4-6 appeared on the BBC's 'Words with Wark'.

One of our S2 pupils was one of six gymnasts who attended the Berks Training Academy in Pennsylvania USA. One of our S5 boys was selected to represent the District in the Scottish Schools' Golf Championship

Two of our young footballers signed professional 'S' forms.

A final word...

We feel that over the last three years, most of the 'big picture' has been put in place. In our next three year development planning cycle, we will be focusing on the detail. We have been engaged in a whole school self-evaluation exercise this session which has included:

- ◆ a whole school scan using 'How Good is our School?' Performance Indicators;
- ◆ a 'How Good is my Department' exercise led by Principal Teachers;
- ◆ a 'How Good is my Classroom' exercise for all teachers;
- ◆ staff Development and Review opportunities for all staff (including non-teaching staff).

From this process our priorities for 2000-2003 will emerge.

Chapter 13

Methilhill Primary and Community School

School Facts



Methilhill Primary and Community School
Sea Road
Methilhill
KY8 2JW
Fife
Tel: 01592 414 477
Fax: 01592 414 478

Headteacher

Charles Small

Length of time in post

12 years

Type of school

5-11 Primary

Number of pupils

450

Staff numbers (FTE)

22

Location/catchment area

Former mining village with mainly local authority housing

Physical environment

Attractive modern building

% of pupils entitled to free meals

48%



Background

The new Methilhill Primary and Community School opened to pupils in May 1991 replacing the old 'temporary building' erected in 1926! It is a high tech building comprising two wings of eight open plan areas enclosing on three sides two tiled quadrangles. The trunk of the building houses the administration and communal areas. The building is surrounded by a hard surfaced playground, a floodlit court and a grass playing field. Methilhill is a former mining village which was hard hit by the collapse of the coal industry. Unemployment is high and almost 50% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The levels of need have been recognized by Fife Council over the years. Support has been provided to maintain the feeder nursery's Woodlands Family Centre, the limited community use programme and more recently the opportunities provided by the New Community School initiative, involving Woodlands Family Centre, Buckhaven High School and Methilhill Primary and Community School.

Learning for life

In Methilhill staff believe they are educating children for life today and for life in the future. As children's learning does not only take place between 9am and 3pm, they believe that honest and open partnerships within and beyond school should be developed to provide a ring of support for their learners. Staff also need to widen the horizons of experience, expectation, confidence and responsibility to enable the children to make the most of their childhood years and of the opportunities provided both inside and outside the school.

Over the years as a staff, teachers have developed a whole school awareness and involvement, offering colleagues opportunities to take on new developments in a natural and meaningful way. If staff are to value pupils and parents, they need to value themselves. They believe they need to be sensitive to the needs of the whole organisation and to the unique contributions individuals can make, not only in times of celebration, but also through the more difficult times.

Partnership with parents

When the Head Teacher was appointed some 12 years ago, he formed the impression that few parents visited the school on a regular basis and that most of the meetings between staff and parents were initiated as a result of bad behaviour. Class teachers rarely met parents outwith Parent/Teacher interview times and many parents seemed ill at ease with the building. Often an aggressive approach was taken by parents as the only way to deal with figures of authority.

By devoting a great deal of time and energy at all levels to improving this situation, Methilhill has now reached a point where teachers see over 90% of parents at least twice a year and most teachers are in contact with groups of parents on a regular basis. These meetings do not always take place at traditional parents' evenings – parents' afternoon interviews are arranged, professional and creative use of staff time ensures that other meetings take place and often visits to the school can end up as meetings between teacher and parent!

By responding to parents' needs and giving them time whenever they arrive at school, staff have built up a genuine partnership with the parents of their pupils.

The promoted staff spend a great deal of every day meeting with parents but know that it is time well spent. Often parents do not have the confidence to write long letters, talk openly in large meetings or even manage to attend meetings due to family circumstances, but they can and do make a valuable contribution in a more informal setting over a cup of coffee.

Over 150 adults regularly attend the Wednesday evening **Community Use** activities and over 50 children, young adults and adults are supporting the Thursday evening groups. These figures do not include all the mums, dads and grandparents who deliver and collect the younger children.

Recently over 60 parents turned up to hear about the new 'Out of School Learning' initiative. The opportunity was used to consult with parents about a much wider range of issues, such as their needs for the new Community School.

- ◆ One suggestion was that Parent/Teacher Curricular Clinics on the Wednesday Community nights should be arranged for parents wishing to ask about aspects of teaching and learning.
- ◆ More Maths classes for parents were required.
- ◆ Special slots on Friday afternoons should be arranged for parents who finish work early on that day.
- ◆ The need for Parenting Classes was established and a group of 12 has already begun.

Developing the whole child

The Head Teacher firmly believes that creativity is one of the most powerful learning tools for his pupils and the expressive arts play a very important role in the life of the school. Visiting teachers are part of the whole school team and, with class teachers, jointly plan and implement aspects of the curriculum. Children grow up valuing these aspects of the curriculum, their own abilities and the contribution of others.

The staff use music and drama when whole school issues have to be developed and kept to the fore. The **Playground Project**, which gave the pupils the responsibility to develop a Code of Conduct, used a specially written song 'Playground PAL' to help carry the

message beyond the hall and into the playground (fig. 1). Scenes were devised by the children to show how the playground card system worked.

A Green card, for example, is given for positive behaviour in the playground (fig. 2).

GREEN CARD

Name:
Class:
Date:
Time:

- One whole term with no cards
- Helping others when they are in trouble
- Being polite
- Helping a playground supervisor
- Reacting in a responsible way
- Showing respect to others
- Telling about accidents
- Letting others join in your game
- Playing with lonely people
- Playing sensible/good games

fig. 2

Playground P.A.L.S.

**If you wanna have fun
Be a PAL in the
Methilhill playground.
If you wanna have fun
Be a PAL and stay safe
and sound.
And if we all learn to
play this way
We'll still be friends at
the end of the day.
So be a P.A.L.
Play safe with friends
who care.**

fig. 1

On another occasion even a monster from space visited to see what was going on in the Methilhill playground! Recently when discarded needles were found in the community and in the playground, another song was used to get two messages across to the children as part of our drug awareness programme. The first message was what children should do if they came across a needle in the street, park or playground. Pupils also needed to know the difference between 'good' needles and 'bad' needles as one parent who was diabetic pointed out. As the song says 'A needle in the right hands can do a lot of good, but a needle in the wrong hands is a danger to you and me' (fig. 3, next page).

Danger, Needle, Danger

If you see a syringe,
Out in the street,
Danger, Needle, Danger
There for you to meet
Be neat,
Leave it alone.
Go and tell an adult to phone
Don't touch
Leave it alone,
Go and tell an adult to phone.

A needle in the right hands,
Can do a lot of good,
And those who use them properly,
Dispose of them as they should.
But a needle in the wrong hands,
Is a danger to you and me.
So we must know just what to do.
If a needle we happen to see.

If you see a syringe,
Out in the park,
Danger, Needle, Danger,
'Specially in the dark.
Be smart,
Leave it alone,
Go and tell an adult to phone,
Don't touch,
Leave it alone,
Go and tell an adult to phone.

fig. 3

With the financial help of the School Board, Methilhill pupils also enjoy a range of creative and sporting opportunities. All children are offered the opportunity to:

- ✓ attend the theatre
- ✓ attend or participate in the Burns Supper
- ✓ take part in at least one large scale musical production
- ✓ visit York or Largs in connection with the Viking project
- ✓ spend a week at Fife's outdoor centre
- ✓ play football and other sports
- ✓ participate in a music/dance festival
- ✓ visit the local coal museum, library, supermarket and art gallery.

The senior pupils are very keen to show visitors round their school and certainly give an honest child's view of the life of the school. The good news is that visitors have always been very impressed with their tour guides and have often commented on just how much ownership the children seem to have developed.

A community school

The children also share their work, skills and talents with community groups by entertaining lunch clubs or church guilds.

One appreciative member of the community who is also a grandmother of three of the pupils involved, recorded her appreciation in a letter to the Headteacher:

'I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed the ceilidh and the harvest festival. The children were so well presented and smart and most of all in these days well behaved. It gives you a special glow to think that the kids put in the effort to learn the songs etc that so helped cheer me up twice in the one week. Congratulations and thanks to all concerned, the teachers as well for the time they put in helping the kids. Is there any chance that I can look forward to a Christmas concert by them? There is hope for the future when you see children willing and enjoying themselves at the same time, taking the time to entertain the community.'

Recently they made a banner for the British Legion Hall. The Ladies Section was so delighted with the banner the P5 children had designed and made with the visiting craft teacher, that they not only held a dedication service and tea party to which all P5 pupils and their parents were invited, but the ladies have also volunteered to join the rota of helpers who will run the new breakfast club.

This year twelve pupils who were elected by their P7 peers, under election voting rules, have been involved with the designer in creating new Millennium costumes for this year's Gala ceremony. At a time when the Gala committee were experiencing difficulties, the School Board stepped in and carried on the tradition of the Gala Prince and Princess ceremony at their Summer Fayre. The relationship between the Board and the Gala committee is now very strong, thanks to a shared understanding of the tasks involved and the desire to do their best for the children of Methilhill.

The school chaplain regularly brings along colleagues from all over the world to share their experiences with the children.

The staff try to make learning real while at the same time building up skills across the curriculum. Every day offers opportunities to develop PSD skills and the staff have the confidence to develop these. The teachers know their pupils well and celebrate their successes socially, academically and artistically with praise, certificates and occasionally even prizes (fig. 4).

Communication

Good communication is a key factor in developing the climate of openness and collaboration in every aspect of the school. The school bulletin 'Good Morning Methilhill' is issued by the Headteacher every morning to keep staff and pupils informed of everything that is going on. Contributions from staff and pupils are always welcomed. 'The Methilhill Memo' goes home to parents on a regular basis filled with school and community news. Weekly contributions to the local newspaper are also made about school life. Quality two way interaction between members of staff whether teaching or non-teaching, trust and good record keeping also play an important part in maintaining good communication.

Focus on the curriculum

Recently the school has been involved in Fife's extremely successful **Early Intervention** project, 'Stepping Stones.' The project has focused on raising attainment and challenging the practices and expectations of schools. Staff are very aware of the increased confidence with which the pupils now tackle their learning. Children are using the opportunities provided as well as the skills they are developing to express their views in real life situations. This has been particularly evident in their emergent writing.

The school also runs a **Paired Reading** scheme, where more than 70 older pupils act as tutors to younger pupils. The tutors are trained using videos and other materials and meet their partners for three twenty minute sessions each week. The older boys in the group act as positive role models for the younger boys so that academic success is seen as worthwhile and even 'cool.' Views expressed by pupils reflect how well the scheme is progressing:

'Paired reading is a great way to start the day'.

'I enjoy caring and being responsible for another person.'

'We are both learning to become better readers.'

The **New Community School** status now offers the whole school population opportunities to develop many of the initiatives underway, built on solid foundations. However the headteacher feels that the school can never stand still and must constantly keep moving to keep up with the demands of an ever changing society both now and in the future.

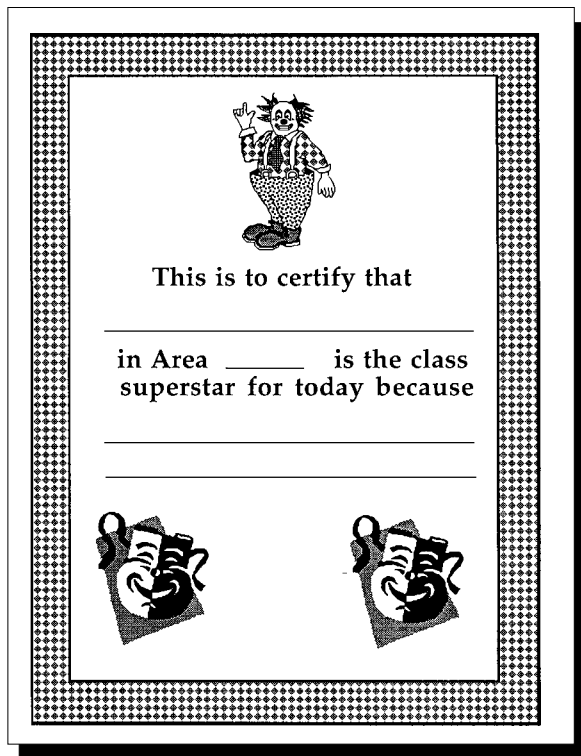


fig. 4

