

**Sanday Community School
and nursery class
Orkney Islands Council
4 December 2007**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	2
3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	2
4. How good is the environment for learning?	7
5. Leading and improving the school	9
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	11
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	12
Appendix 3 Attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications	13
How can you contact us?	14

1. Background

Sanday Community School and nursery class were inspected in September 2007. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. It evaluated the quality of the curriculum and pupils' achievements, including their performance in examinations (see Appendix 3). HM Inspectors also evaluated the quality of learning and teaching and pupil support, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

The school is a non-denominational school serving the island of Sanday. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 85 with 11 in the nursery, 37 in primary, and 37 in secondary. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council which had just been established, representatives of the parent-teacher association and a group of parents. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents¹, pupils and to all staff.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

Evaluations in this report, except where otherwise indicated, apply equally to pre-school, primary and secondary stages.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The many examples of high quality learning experiences for pupils, particularly in the secondary department.
- Pupils' wider achievements within the school community.
- The quality of pastoral care for all pupils and inclusion of pupils with additional support needs.
- Productive partnerships and very effective links with the community of Sanday.
- Strong staff commitment and teamwork and the very positive relationships within the school.
- The leadership of the headteacher in successfully developing shared leadership, and the contributions of the principal teacher.

3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?

Curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum was very good. At all stages, pupils benefited from the contributions of specialist teachers and visitors, and from a wide range of educational visits both on and outwith the island. In the nursery, staff made very good use of the natural environment to enhance children's learning experiences. Children had opportunities to choose from a wide range of activities. The primary curriculum provided pupils with very good integrated experiences, particularly in environmental studies. Learning through play, however, was not always purposeful enough at the early stages. Based on a sound rationale, the school made very effective use of flexible timetabling and deployment of staff at the secondary stages to adopt innovative, cross-curricular approaches to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils at S1 and S2, for example, worked on a three day project based on 'The Lady of Shalott', involving integrated learning across art and design, drama, English, home economics, information and communications technology (ICT), music and technology. The project culminated in an effective presentation to parents and other pupils. With support from its community, the school offered an outstanding range of well-structured activities to help pupils learn outwith the classroom. The programme included a cycle of residential excursions designed to give all secondary pupils opportunities to participate in visits within Orkney, elsewhere in Scotland and abroad, and in an outdoor education experience. Pupils at S3/S4 studied a balanced curriculum of eight Standard Grade subjects. The school used innovative approaches such as 'twilight' sessions, tutors and video-conferencing to extend the range of subjects and levels offered to meet pupils' particular needs. To compensate for the time available for physical education (PE) being less than recommended, pupils attended a broad range of physical activities after school. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT were not yet sufficiently integrated across the primary curriculum. In the secondary department,

pupils' skills in using ICT were developed effectively through the S1/S2 course, but they did not have sufficient opportunities to use them within some subjects. Across the school, activities to support pupils' personal and social development were well planned. Effective curricular and vocational guidance was provided for secondary pupils. The school worked hard to provide appropriate work experience for all S4 pupils.

Teaching and meeting pupils' needs

The overall quality of teaching was good at the primary stages and very good at the secondary stages. Most teachers provided clear explanations and instructions, and used questioning well to enhance pupils' understanding. Secondary teachers made very effective use of practical activities and direct, interactive teaching to enhance pupils' learning. They gave pupils very good opportunities to develop learning skills and to attend well-organised supported study classes after school. Most teachers shared the content and aims of lessons clearly with pupils to help them make links in their learning. The range of homework at the primary stages was too narrow.

In the secondary department, tasks and activities were very well matched to the learning needs of individual pupils. However, these were not always sufficiently challenging for higher achieving pupils in the primary department. At all stages, pupils with additional support needs were very well supported by teachers and support staff and were making very good progress. Their learning needs were systematically identified and regular meetings took place to share information. These meetings included other support professionals, such as speech and language therapists, as needed. The school involved parents in setting learning targets and kept them well informed about their children's progress.

Learning and personal development

Nursery children responded positively to the learning environment and staff were supportive of individual children and interacted sensitively with them. Most children were active, motivated and able to persevere and complete tasks. A few needed to be more challenged in their thinking. Across the school, pupils responded well to their teachers. Almost all were well motivated, concentrated well on tasks set and completed their work assignments as directed. They worked very well with each other, sharing ideas and solving problems. In the primary department, pupils responded well to teachers' questions but were not always challenged effectively enough to give of their best. In some areas of the curriculum, primary pupils had a clear idea of what they needed to do to improve their work. This was evident, for example, in writing at almost all stages but not in mathematics. The pace of learning in the secondary department was very good but it was not consistent in the primary. At some primary stages, pupils were not sufficiently active in their learning.

Children in the nursery were happy, settled and familiar with the nursery rules and routines. They cooperated well with one another and were able to share and take turns. They were gaining independence in personal tasks and took responsibility for tidying around the nursery. Pupils' personal and social development across the school was very good. The extensive programme of learning outwith the classroom was having a positive impact on pupils' confidence and independence. The school had won the Scottish Schools Africa Challenge in 2005. Pupils' involvement in the range of activities introduced as part of the school's productive links with its partner school in Malawi had helped to develop a very good sense of global citizenship and equality. As a result of a strong musical tradition in the school, pupils participated successfully in the island's junior and senior fiddle clubs, playing

traditional and classical music. They were also supported by the school to take part in Orkney Islands sporting activities, particularly in football, fencing, athletics and swimming. Their achievements in athletics and swimming were accredited through national bodies. All pupils from S3 upwards took part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and several had progressed beyond school to gain gold awards. Involvement in these activities and in the wide range of residential experiences helped pupils to develop good levels of self-confidence and responsibility. At all stages, pupils were gaining a good understanding of sustainability of the environment through the school's plantation project, and through working with the Sanday Development Trust on initiatives such as paper recycling. Pupils' entries for local and national competitions often achieved success, for example in the National Galleries for Scotland Art Competition for Schools. A significant achievement last session had been the production of an excellent animated film produced by primary and secondary pupils working with a local artist and technical consultant.

English language

In the nursery, children were making good progress in communication and language. They enjoyed listening to stories. Some children were starting to blend the sounds of familiar letters. Most children were able to use language confidently whilst talking to one another and to adults. Children did not have enough opportunities to learn to write through play. The overall quality of attainment in English language was good from P1 to P7 and very good from S1 to S4. Across P1 to P7, most pupils attained or exceeded appropriate national levels in reading and the majority did so in writing. By the end of S2, almost all pupils had attained appropriate national levels or above in reading and most did so in writing. The school was still working towards assessing pupils' attainment levels in talking and listening from P1 to S2. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils attaining Credit awards was well above the national average. At all stages, pupils listened well to instructions and almost all were confident in talking about their experiences. At P4/P5 pupils shared their ideas effectively but elsewhere in the primary department pupils' skills in group discussion were not well enough developed. At all stages, pupils had an appropriate understanding of what they were reading and read regularly for enjoyment. At P4/P5 and from S1 to S4, pupils were progressing very well in writing. A small but significant minority of pupils at P1 to P3 and P6 to P7 did not yet write accurately enough at length for a range of purposes. These pupils were improving their reading and writing through very effective learning support. From S1 onwards, pupils were developing appropriate thinking skills for talking, listening, reading and writing in response to challenging issues and texts.

Mathematics

Nursery children were making good progress in early mathematics. Most were able to count and recognise some numbers. They made simple patterns and sorted and matched a range of objects by size and colour. Children's interest in mathematics and their developing knowledge of mathematical concepts needed to be promoted through a wider range of activities across the nursery. The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. At the primary stages, most pupils attained in line with expected national levels and around a quarter of pupils from P2 to P7 attained these levels earlier than normally expected. By the end of S2, most achieved appropriate national levels. In the current S2, the majority of pupils were working beyond this level. At S4, the proportion of pupils attaining a Credit award was significantly above the national average. There had been successful early presentation at Credit level and at Higher grade.

Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties in mathematics were making good progress towards agreed targets. From P2, pupils could extract information from graphs and, by the upper stages of primary and in secondary S1 and S2 could make deductions on trends from graphical data. However, pupils lacked skills in using computers to analyse data. Pupils at the early stages were making good progress in developing counting skills and understanding basic number processes. At all stages from P3, pupils were developing confidence and skill in mental calculation and were able to explain clearly their reasoning. At the secondary stages, pupils' number skills continued to develop appropriately. Pupils from P4 to S2 had an appropriate knowledge of the properties of two- and three- dimensional shapes. At the primary stages and in S1/S2, pupils had developed skills in problem solving but sometimes needed to be given a greater level of challenge, particularly at the upper primary stages. At S3/S4, pupils were building on previous work well and developing appropriate skills in areas such as algebra and trigonometry.

Expressive arts

There were important strengths in the development of pupils' skills in expressive arts throughout the school. Nursery children had made a collage of Sanday which included wooden models of their houses. They experimented with the different sounds of musical instruments, and sang familiar songs and rhymes. Some took part in role play in the home corner. Pupils in P1 to P3 were able to use pattern and line to create accurate drawings of themselves. Pupils in P4/P5 explored shape and the decorative qualities of hieroglyphics effectively in designing clay Shabti tomb figures linked to their study of the Egyptians. Pupils in P6/P7 used gesture, movement and mime creatively to enact situations such as the crossing of a river. They demonstrated effective performance skills through several dramatic presentations. Pupils in S1 and S2 were making very good progress in art and design. At all stages, pupils performed well in creative group work. Those in S1 and S2 worked very well together to create scenery, digital images and human sculptures as part of a cross-curricular project. Across the school, pupils sang tunefully and enthusiastically. From P4 to P7, pupils performed well on keyboards. At all stages, they were acquiring a good knowledge and understanding of an appropriate range of musical concepts. All pupils presented for Standard Grade art and design and music in S3 and S4 attained Credit or General awards. With the help of a local artist and technical consultant, several pupils from P6 to S4 had created and made the characters and designed and built the set for an outstanding animation called 'Lights Out' which featured Start Point Lighthouse, a local landmark on Sanday. They had also written the story and the script, helped with the animation and filming, written and performed the music and provided the voices.

Technology and home economics

There were important strengths in the development of pupils' knowledge and skills in technology throughout the primary stages. All pupils had benefited from participating in design and make activities related to class topics. Those in P2/P3 had used simple tools to make pull-along toys. Pupils in P5 and P6 were able to discuss the factors that they had considered and the strategies used to design and model a range of imaginative 'space buggies'. Pupils in S1 and S2 were making very good progress in craft, design and technology. They showed a clear understanding of stages of the design process and their skills in using tools and materials were developing well. Pupils in S1 and S2 were making good progress with their home economics coursework. They worked very well together to design and make a series of textile collages as part of a cross-curricular project. At S3/S4, pupils' practical skills were developing well. All pupils who had been presented for Standard Grade home economics had achieved Credit or General awards. The proportion of pupils who achieved Credit awards was above the national average.

Attainment

Information about the subjects inspected has been given earlier in the report. Across the school, particular features of pupil's progress, results in examinations and other qualifications, including those awarded by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)² for the three-year period 2005-2007 are included below.

The overall quality of attainment at S1/S2 was very good. Particular features included the following.

- Pupils were making very good progress in their coursework, building on their prior learning.
- Almost all pupils had achieved or exceeded appropriate national levels in reading. Most had achieved these levels in writing and in mathematics.

The overall quality of attainment at S3/S4 was very good. Particular features included the following.

- The proportions of pupils achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 5 and level 3 were well above national averages. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 4 was above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils gaining Credit awards at Standard Grade was well above national averages in chemistry, craft and design, French, geography and history.

² Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>The school placed a very high priority on ensuring pupils' care and welfare. Staff were clear about child protection procedures. They were advised on important issues such as preventing bullying, drugs misuse or racial incidents. Pupil support was provided very effectively through an approach based on all staff having responsibility for the pupils with whom they worked. Staff communicated very well with one another and with managers about pupils' wellbeing. Pupils were confident that any concerns could be discussed readily with someone in the school and that appropriate support would be provided. Other professionals within council services such as the visiting support teacher, educational psychologist and social workers, made valued additional contributions to pupils' learning and welfare. The school responded very positively to the relatively high incidence of pupils transferring into the school at different stages. New pupils were quickly incorporated into the school community. Pupils whose behaviour caused concern were very well supported. The school maintained close links with parents. Pupils benefited from a very positive social experience at lunchtime and good quality meals. Free fruit was provided to all pupils up to P7. The wide range of after-school activities helped to promote healthy lifestyles, and provided a sound basis for the school to extend its approach to health promotion.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was very good overall. Particular features included the provision of ICT, new rooms for social subjects and music, and ample, safe outdoor areas. In addition, pupils benefited from access to community facilities, such as the swimming pool, within the school building. The building was very clean and well maintained. A wide range of pupils' work was attractively displayed throughout the school. Appropriate security arrangements were in place and there was good access for users with mobility difficulties. Plans were in place to extend the accommodation for science. The school was also working with the community to overcome some limitations in facilities for indoor PE.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school had a stimulating atmosphere which encouraged all to learn. Staff, pupils and visitors felt welcomed, valued and safe. Relationships between staff and pupils were extremely positive and pupils were enthusiastic, friendly and helpful. Pupils, parents and staff identified strongly with the school and were exceptionally proud to be associated with it. The quality of teamwork and morale among staff and pupils was particularly high. Teachers' high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievements were well met overall. School assemblies recognised and promoted pupils' achievements. There were regular opportunities for religious observance. Staff took care to involve all pupils in the life of the school and gave very good attention to promoting success and equal access to the curriculum. They successfully promoted racial equality, tolerance and respect for others through their health, religious and moral education and personal and social development programmes. Pupils were not yet sufficiently involved in discussing lunchtime arrangements and the promotion of healthy eating.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school had very well-established and productive partnerships with parents and the local community, and was regarded highly by them. It communicated regularly with parents through informative newsletters, the school website and a comprehensive handbook. It provided parents with helpful information about their children's progress through regular reports and parents' evenings, which were very well attended. Parents were suitably consulted on potentially sensitive curricular issues, for example, relating to sexual health and personal relationships. The school had well-established links with the community, including productive links with other island schools. There was a well-planned induction programme for nursery children transferring to P1 and P7 pupils transferring into S1, as well as very good arrangements for pupils transferring to Kirkwall Grammar School. The school made very good use of community resources to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils' involvement in school concerts, fairs and fundraising enhanced the school's reputation in the local community.</p>

5. Leading and improving the school

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

Overall, the school provided a quality education for its pupils within a caring and supportive learning environment. In a remote geographical position, the education authority and the school had succeeded in delivering a very good overall breadth and quality of educational provision, particularly through a number of innovative cross-curricular approaches. Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. At the last Care Commission inspection there were four recommendations which had been addressed satisfactorily.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. He had developed very positive relationships with staff, parents and pupils. He demonstrated a high level of professional competence and commitment and his teaching was a model of good practice. He had led improvements in the curriculum and encouraged teamwork and flexibility in teaching approaches. This work had resulted in more active involvement of pupils in their learning, particularly in the secondary department. Teachers responded positively and enthusiastically to the headteacher's encouragement to use their expertise and take the lead in various curricular initiatives. There was scope, however, to provide a clearer lead in improving aspects of learning and teaching in the primary department. The principal teacher provided very good support to the headteacher. She was a highly effective and enthusiastic practitioner who demonstrated high standards in teaching. Leading by example, she supported colleagues and pupils very well. The school's approaches to evaluating the quality of its work were good overall. The headteacher carried out classroom observations and gave useful feedback on aspects of teaching. Systems for ensuring that pupils' progress was tracked over time and across departments were developing well. Parents had been consulted about aspects of the school's provision and had given useful feedback. Overall, the school has a very good capacity for continued improvement.

As well as building on the strengths and addressing the issues raised throughout this report, the school and the education authority should address the following main points for action.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- ensure consistency in the quality of learning and teaching at the primary stages; and
- continue to develop the monitoring of learning and teaching and tracking of pupils' progress.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

June Graham
HM Inspector

4 December 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How well does the school raise achievement for all?	
Structure of the curriculum	very good
The teaching process in the secondary department	very good
The teaching process in the primary department	good
Meeting pupils' needs in the secondary department	very good
Meeting pupils' needs in the primary department	good
Pupils' learning experiences in the secondary department	very good
Pupils' learning experiences in the primary department	good
Personal and social development	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language in the secondary department	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language in the primary department	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good
Overall quality of attainment: S1/S2	very good
Overall quality of attainment: S3/S4	very good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	very good
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	very good
Partnership with parents, the Parent Council and the community	very good
Leading and improving the school	
Leadership: headteacher	very good
Self-evaluation	good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

The following provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered in the inspection and comments are included as appropriate throughout the report.

What parents think the school does well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • The school had a good reputation in the community. • Staff set high standards and expected children to work to their best. • Staff kept the school building clean and in good order. • Staff looked after their children well and treated them fairly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help parents of secondary pupils to support their children's homework. • Deal more effectively with the inappropriate behaviour of a few pupils.
What pupils think the school does well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers checked their homework, explained things clearly and helped them with their work. • Teachers expected them to work hard and let them know how to improve their learning. • The school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of a few pupils. • Ensure that everyone is treated fairly.
What staff think the school does well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They liked working in the school. • They showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils and were aware of child protection issues. • They had good opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes. • Pupil success was regularly celebrated. • There was effective communication between senior managers and staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

Appendix 3 Attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S4

		2005	2006	2007 ³
English and Mathematics @ Level 3	Sanday Community School	100	100	88
	National	90	91	91
5+ @ Level 3 or better	Sanday Community School	100	100	88
	National	90	91	91
5+ @ Level 4 or better	Sanday Community School	88	100	75
	National	76	77	75
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Sanday Community School	63	100	38
	National	34	35	32

³ Pre Appeal

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education and Recreation, local councillors, and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEcomplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

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