

**Beaully Primary School  
The Highland Council  
25 October 2005**

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## **1. Background**

Beauly Primary School was inspected in June 2005 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the School Board and the parents' association (PA), and a group of parents.

The school serves the town of Beauly and the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 147, including 20 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

The work of the nursery class was not included in this inspection.

## **2. Key strengths**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Confident, polite and very well behaved pupils.
- The very positive relationships between staff and pupils.

## **3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?**

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents and carers were positive about most aspects of the school. They felt it had a good reputation and set high standards for pupils' work and behaviour. Their children enjoyed being at the school. Parents did not feel they were well informed about the work of the school and the progress their children were making. Pupils said that they found the school happy and friendly, and welcoming to new pupils. They valued their positive relationships with staff and the praise they received from teachers when they had done something well. They thought the school toilets were in poor condition, and there were not enough playground activities at break times. Staff also appreciated the good relationships they had with pupils, and were happy in the school overall. The

majority did not feel that the acting headteacher communicated with them well and consulted them effectively.

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

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

The structure of the curriculum was fair. There had been recent improvements to it through the purchase of new materials, such as for art and design, information and communications technology (ICT) and drama. However, there were important weaknesses in the structure of the curriculum. There was no systematic development of pupils' skills in listening and talking. In mathematics and the mapskills course, there was too much emphasis on pupils working through commercially produced texts. Available time had not been sufficiently focused on raising attainment at the middle and upper stages. Teachers had very positive relationships with pupils. They made effective use of praise to motivate them. Overall, teachers used a limited range of teaching approaches. They did not share the aims of lessons with pupils, or give them useful feedback on what they needed to do to improve. The overall quality of the teaching process was fair.

Pupils worked hard in class on the tasks set. In a few lessons, including researching countries of the world, they had opportunities to work together and to evaluate each others' contributions. In these lessons they were enthusiastic about their learning. However, in other lessons, including English language at the upper stages, they had too few opportunities to collaborate. Overall, tasks and activities were too often not well matched to pupils' abilities and prior learning and often took too long to complete. As a result, the quality of pupils' learning was fair.

Pupils throughout the schools were developing their skills in the use of ICT. However, they had few opportunities to use these skills in their wider learning, such as in mathematics and English language. Their skills in science were developing well through learning about the life cycle of the sunflower in P2/P3, and in investigating buoyancy in P3/P4. At P5/P6 pupils had a good understanding of the properties of conductors and insulators, and knew how to make simple electrical circuits. Pupils at the early stages had a good understanding of their local environment through walks around the town to note specific features of buildings and areas of particular interest. They used this information well to discuss what they felt was best about the town, and how it might be improved. Pupils at P7 had effectively used their enterprise skills to organise a concert to raise money for the school fund. The citizenship skills of some pupils developed well through P6 pupils acting as buddies to support pupils from the nursery in their transition to P1. Pupils were very well involved in shinty, with notable success for the teams and individual players in local and national competitions. Football teams took part in inter-school tournaments, and were supported by staff from local football league teams.

## **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was fair, and had varied from year to year. Almost all pupils at the early and middle stages were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment in listening and talking. However, these skills were not sufficiently developed in older pupils. By P3 almost all pupils listened carefully in class and most responded well to instructions. At P4 to P6 they reported back to classes on projects they had undertaken. However, they had too few opportunities overall for talking and listening as they progressed through the school. Almost all pupils at the early stages, and most at the middle and upper stages, were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing. Around half were exceeding these levels in reading, and a few were exceeding them in writing. Only the majority of P7 pupils were reaching appropriate levels. Pupils at all stages could read appropriate texts fluently and with good understanding. Most read widely for pleasure. However, they did not have a good understanding of how writers achieved their effects. Pupils developed a clear understanding of the structure of language as they progressed through the school. They did not write sufficiently widely for a range of purposes. They had a limited understanding of the different kinds of writing. At the upper stages, pupils' writing was not well structured.

## **Mathematics**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good, and had been steadily improving in recent years. Almost all pupils at the early and middle stages, and most at the upper stages, were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment. Only the majority of P7 pupils were reaching them. Almost all pupils at the early stages achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. A few exceeded these levels at other stages. Pupils at all stages could interpret graphs skilfully. At P7, pupils had carried out a survey in connection with their enterprise project, and had effectively analysed the results. Most other pupils at the middle and upper stages had carried out simple surveys. Few pupils had yet used computers to organise and display information. Pupils at all stages could carry out mental and written calculations accurately in a range of contexts, including measurement. At P4/P5, pupils knew how to round off answers according to the situation they were dealing with. However, pupils' progress in developing number skills was limited by the time spent on mental activities that were too easy for them. Across the school, pupils had a very good knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They could solve a wide range of mathematical problems and describe the strategies they had used.

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

The school had good arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of its pupils. Staff knew their pupils and the community well. Pupils felt happy and safe in school. Older pupils were aware of the dangers of substance misuse and had helped inform younger pupils of these at an assembly. The school had made an effective start to implementing its programme to promote a healthy lifestyle. All staff had been trained in child protection procedures. There was no formal arrangement in place for another staff member to deputise for the headteacher when she was out of school. The school

did not operate any system whereby pupils could report anonymously on any worries or complaints they had.

There were important weaknesses in the way the school met pupils' needs. Within classes at the middle and upper stages, tasks and activities did not allow pupils to make appropriate progress from their prior learning. Often activities were too easy, or took too long to complete. This slowed pupils' progress and reduced their attainment. Tasks in mathematics did not make use of real-life contexts or materials. A small group of pupils with additional support needs had individualised educational programmes (IEPs). These programmes were effective overall in ensuring that pupils made good progress in their learning. However, teaching staff were not fully involved in setting and reviewing learning targets within the IEPs. Pupils did not share in setting and reviewing targets. A range of classroom assistants and other support staff, including the support for learning teacher, gave valuable further support to individuals and groups in classes. However, staff were not always used flexibly enough to give support to those pupils who would have benefited most from it, such as by giving intensive short-term support.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation was fair. One of the school buildings housed an attractive library area which contained six computers. The staffroom and office had recently been redecorated. The school had appropriate security procedures. Extensive playing fields were well used for games. However, the paved playground was a hazard to pupils. Traffic was not separated from pupils in the school grounds. Aspects of maintenance required attention, including water penetration to the buildings and heating that was difficult to control.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>Pupils and staff were proud of the school. Pupils were confident, polite and very well behaved. Relationships between pupils and staff were very positive. The pupil council had been established in order to involve pupils in decision-making in the school, though this had not yet had an impact. Most parents found the school welcoming. However, the morale of a few staff was low because they had not been consulted about changes in the school. The school celebrated pupils' successes in classes and at assemblies, through headteacher's certificates and the 'pupil of the week' award. Pupils responded very well to teachers' very high standards for their behaviour and classwork by working very hard on tasks set. However, overall expectations for pupils' attainment were too low. The school had appropriate procedures to ensure equality and fairness for members of the school community, including the small number of bilingual pupils. It had adopted the education authority's race equality policy. However, poor communication between the headteacher and staff led some members of staff to feel unfairly treated. There were insufficient opportunities for religious observance.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and the community</p>	<p>The school's partnership with parents, the School Board and the community was fair. The school did not have a positive working relationship with the School Board. The School Board had been actively campaigning with local councillors to improve the school buildings. The PA raised funds for school trips, such as to Aigas and the Newtonmore Folk Museum. School reports to parents on their children's progress gave detailed information on attainment, strengths and development needs. They also gave suggestions as to how parents could support their children's learning at home. Newsletters to parents were informative, but could be improved by reviewing the style of presentation. The school had not consulted parents on its approaches to health education. There were sound procedures to support the transfer of pupils between local nurseries and the school, and between the school and its associated secondary school.</p>

## 7. Improving the school

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

Relationships between pupils and staff at Beauley Primary School were very positive. At the early stages, pupils' attainment was high overall. However, this very good start was not maintained through the middle and upper stages. Important weaknesses in the curriculum restricted pupils' progress as they moved through the school. In addition, teachers did not effectively assess pupils' learning. As a result they could not inform pupils of what they needed to do to improve, and could not effectively plan the next steps in their learning. By P7, pupils' attainment was low. Despite the commitment of staff to their pupils, important weaknesses in learning and teaching severely limited the school's capacity to improve.

At the time of the inspection, the acting headteacher had been in post for 16 months. She had carried out some refurbishment of the school accommodation. She had purchased additional resources to enhance the teaching of several curriculum areas. This was having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' experiences. However, she had not established a clear strategic vision for the improvement of the school. She had not been wholly successful in gaining the confidence of staff and parents. There had been recent improvements to the school's approaches to evaluating the quality of its provision. Staff had taken a broad view of the school's work using indicators of quality developed nationally. The views of parents and pupils had been sought through a questionnaire. The acting headteacher had monitored lessons and teachers' plans. However, the feedback from this was not useful. It had not identified the long-standing key weaknesses in pace and challenge in lessons, and how to address these. The school did not monitor the progress of pupils accurately enough to be able to identify how attainment could be improved.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to increase the pace and challenge of pupils' learning in order to improve attainment. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- ensure pupils know what they are doing well and what they need to do next to improve their learning;
- improve the quality and continuity of pupils' learning, and the involvement of all staff in improving the school;
- improve the school's partnership with parents and the School Board; and
- address the accommodation issues identified in this report.

### **What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in a report to parents and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Brian Stewart  
HM Inspector

25 October 2005

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

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

- No aspects were found to be in this category

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

- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness

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

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Accommodation and facilities
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

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

- No aspects were found to be in this category

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<b>What pleased parents and carers most</b>	<b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoyed being at school and found the work stimulating and challenging.</li> <li>• The school set high standards for pupils' work and encouraged them to work to the best of their ability.</li> <li>• The school made them feel welcome.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of accommodation.</li> <li>• Their knowledge of the school's priorities for improvement and of their children's strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• The consultation process between the school and parents.</li> <li>• The quality of leadership of the school.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased pupils most</b>	<b>What pupils would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers knew them well, expected them to work as hard as they could, and told them when they had done something well.</li> <li>• The school helped to keep them safe and healthy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The toilets in the school.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased staff most</b>	<b>What staff would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The enthusiasm and good behaviour of pupils, and the mutual respect between pupils and staff.</li> <li>• The high standards of work set by staff, and the feedback given to pupils on their progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of leadership of the school, especially communication with staff and procedures for making decisions about the school.</li> </ul>

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

### **If you would like an additional copy of this report**

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

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### **Our complaints procedure**

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600265 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk)

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