

**Beatlie School
Interim follow-through
West Lothian Council
19 December 2006**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Beatlie School in December 2005. The report indicated that HM Inspectors would engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress and would publish an interim report within one year of the publication of the original report.

Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report. HM Inspectors visited the school in October 2006 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

Since the inspection a new headteacher and acting deputy headteacher had been appointed. Both actively promoted more positive teamwork and better communication within the school. This had significantly raised staff morale. The overall ethos of the school was much more positive with raised staff expectations of what pupils could achieve. The senior management team and staff had taken a number of positive steps towards meeting the main points for action of the inspection report. They realised much work was still needed with regard to developing programmes of work and improving quality assurance processes.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in December 2005 identified seven main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in the provision of relevant teaching programmes at all stages to provide pupils with an appropriate breadth of experience and better progression within the curriculum.

The school had made some progress in this main point for action but was aware that more needed to be done.

The education authority was active in supporting and advising the new headteacher in improving the curriculum in the school. A small working group had produced a good draft curriculum policy that incorporated the principles of the national *curriculum for excellence* initiative. Staff had begun to look at programmes of work to meet better the needs of the wide range of pupils within the school. They were considering extending the range of certificated courses to support the school's moves towards providing a curriculum tailored to pupils' needs. Other new developments included a comprehensive environmental studies framework that ensured staff taught a better spread of topics at each stage. Personal and social development was now better embedded within curricular areas and timetabling was more effective. The introduction of multi-agency support plans had significantly improved

the focus of learning and teaching through setting pupils clear individual targets. Staff were aware of the need to continue the development of programmes of work across the curriculum.

3.2 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in approaches to planning and assessment by teachers to enable more accurate monitoring of pupils.

The school had taken some promising steps towards meeting this main point for action but more remained to be done.

The system used by teachers for planning and assessment had been extensively revised and some progress had been made in developing a clearer focus on learning intentions and pupil activity. Teachers consulted regularly with the headteacher as part of the planning process, and staff were positive about the quality of professional dialogue and the advice they received. Staff had also undertaken a number of visits to observe good practice in other schools, including approaches to planning and assessment. Staff had agreed procedures to assess pupils within the appropriate elaborated 5-14 curriculum framework. However, more detailed assessment information was still needed to provide accurate baseline information. This would then ensure that pupils' progress could be measured more accurately.

3.3 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in staff understanding of the links between individual learning plans, pupils' targets and the curriculum and the improved management of Records of Needs to ensure that pupils' curricular and individual needs are met.

The school had made a strong start in progressing this main point for action.

The headteacher had reorganised classes and activities to meet better the needs of all pupils. Pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) were grouped together to ensure a more autistic-friendly environment where staff were focusing well on developing pupils' communication and self help skills. Opportunities for pupils with similar prior attainment to work together had proved very successful. This reorganisation had helped to focus staff on improving teaching and learning for individuals and class groups. All staff, including therapy staff, were more effective in setting pupils' learning targets in line with individual learning plans. However, targets still needed to be linked better to curricular programmes of study as these were developed. The process of replacing Records of Needs with the new Coordinated Support Plans for individual pupils as appropriate was well underway. The education authority had provided good support and worked well with the school in setting up a timeline for this transition. All pupils who may warrant a Coordinated Support Plan should have this in place by mid-January 2007.

3.4 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in pupils' achievements in communication and language through consistent use of symbols and other forms of communication.

The school had already made considerable progress towards meeting this main point for action.

Staff were now more confident in the use of symbols and their consistent use within improved communication systems was evident across the school. Pupils were responding very well to the use of symbols to help structure of their day and to indicate the start and end of activities. Through the consistent use of symbols, pupils knew classroom routines well and successfully moved from one activity to another. Staff in the class for pupils with ASD were very effective in using specific communication approaches to meet the need of a challenging group of pupils. Speech and language therapists had worked alongside staff to advise and support the development of communication approaches and had delivered appropriate training opportunities. Interactive white boards were being used well to involve and motivate pupils in their learning. Staff now needed to further extend their use of symbols across all curricular areas.

3.5 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in collaborative working between all therapists and all staff and opportunities for joint training.

The school had taken a number of very positive steps to address this main point for action.

Teaching and therapy staff had met together on a number of occasions for joint staff development on a good range of relevant topics. This had included training in manual handling and understanding medical conditions. Therapy staff, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists effectively delivered training seminars in a wide range of associated areas including the development of communication and movement programmes for pupils. Staff worked successfully together to set pupils learning targets and this had helped them establish a clear understanding of their role within the learning process. Therapy staff spoke very positively about the positive working environment which had been developed over the last year and their strong relationship with school management and other staff. All staff now recognised the importance of ensuring continued joint working practices in meeting the needs of all pupils.

3.6 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in increasing the length of the school day so it is in line with mainstream schools.

This main point for action had been met.

The headteacher had carried out a detailed consultation exercise with parents on extending the length of the school day for all pupils. The very positive response resulted in the length of the school day being extended in line with mainstream schools. This change had been implemented and was already working well for most pupils.

3.7 The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvement in approaches to quality assurance throughout the school to ensure that staff, senior managers and the authority are clear about the education experience of pupils.

The school had made some progress in this main point for action but more needed to be done.

All staff had cooperated in establishing systems for regular monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This had helped them respond positively to the action plan arising from the inspection report. The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher had undertaken training in quality assurance processes. In response to this, they had put in place a timetable of classroom observations with a focus on learning and teaching. The headteacher now regularly observed lessons and gave helpful feedback to staff. However, the observation programme was not yet fully implemented across the school and feedback needed to be more focused on how staff could improve their practice. Senior managers had started to closely monitor planning folders from each class. They also now met regularly with staff to discuss individual pupil progress towards their learning targets. All these quality assurance processes were promising but were still at an early stage of development.

4. Conclusion

The school and the education authority had taken positive steps to bring about improvement. The new headteacher was now providing clear direction and very positive leadership. The staff, well supported by the education authority, had demonstrated a good capacity for improvement in response to the main points for action in the inspection report. Within two years of the publication of the original report, parents and carers will receive a further report from HMIE on the progress made by the school.

Jane Lopez
HM Inspector

19 December 2006

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 Cultural Services, 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, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600384. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

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