

**Bonar Bridge Primary School  
The Highland Council  
30 August 2005**

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## **1. Background**

Bonar Bridge Primary School was inspected in April 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 representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents. There was no School Board.

The school serves the village of Bonar Bridge and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 61, including 15 children in the nursery class and six pupils in the recently established Gaelic-medium class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

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

Evaluations in this report, except where otherwise indicated, apply equally to the Gaelic-medium and English-medium classes.

## **2. Key strengths**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Committed staff and productive partnerships with parents, carers and the community.
- Pupils' learning experiences in art and design, drama and music, and their public performances.
- Pupils' attainment in English language and the very good start being made to developing pupils' language skills in the Gaelic-medium class.
- Pastoral care in the school and the effective 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 to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents and carers were very positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school. They commended the commitment of all staff, and spoke very highly of the school's involvement with the community. They held the headteacher in high esteem. They indicated that their children enjoyed going to school and felt secure there. One or two commented unfavourably about the condition of outbuildings. Pupils said that they were happy at school, and a number singled out the facilities for physical education, their drama experiences, the well-equipped playground and school meals for particular praise. Older pupils were very positive about school trips. All staff enjoyed working in the school and thought that it was well led. They commented on the very good team spirit and positive atmosphere.

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

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

The overall structure of the curriculum was good. Additional time allocated to English language and mathematics was appropriately focused on raising attainment and on maintaining pupils' performance. Pupils used information and communications technology (ICT) very effectively to produce word-processed documents and to search the web for information to support their work in environmental studies. However, there was scope for greater use of ICT in mathematics and in the wider curriculum. The overall quality of teaching was good. There were many instances of very good teaching. Teachers made very good use of whole class and direct teaching approaches. They provided very clear explanations and made skilful use of questioning. Group and individual activities were well organised. Teachers set appropriate homework tasks to consolidate and extend class work. These tasks were not limited to written work, and some were imaginatively designed to involve parents. Teachers did not always share the objectives of lessons systematically with pupils to ensure that all were fully aware of what was to be learned. All teachers used praise very effectively to encourage and motivate their pupils. In the multi-stage classes, teachers needed to ensure that all tasks were appropriate to the range of learners.

Almost all pupils responded very well in class and were highly motivated learners. They listened attentively and respectfully to their teachers and fellow pupils. They expressed their opinions clearly and confidently, and contributed very effectively to discussions. At the early stage, pupils had good opportunities to learn through play. In a few lessons, the pace of learning was not appropriate. Pupils needed more opportunities to work together and learn from each other. They had a very good experience in art and design, where they learned not only techniques in drawing and painting, but also considered work by famous artists. Pupils' understanding of scientific principles and processes was enhanced through very good practical work in science. Their attainments in technology were very good, and they showed skill in constructing and using models. For pupils in P6 and P7, activities in French ensured good pronunciation, but there needed to be better structure and progression in their modern language work.

The pupil council offered pupils a very effective means of giving their views on issues which directly affected their life in school. Pupil representatives had made very sound suggestions about the improvement of playground facilities and toilets. Pupils had a

good appreciation of a healthy diet and of what to do to keep fit. They participated enthusiastically in vigorous playground games, which were well supervised. All pupils had participated in music-making, and had made a significant contribution to a public performance in Dornoch Cathedral. All took part in ambitious drama productions which were very well received by the local community. Many pupils had achieved success in local athletics competitions. Pupils in P6 and P7 had benefited from a well-organised residential stay in Edinburgh, where they had visited the Scottish Parliament and learned about devolved government. The school organised an ambitious activities week for all pupils every second year. This involved visits to local sites of historic interest, together with a physical activities programme.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Pupils had maintained high standards over recent years. Those with additional support needs were making good progress in their learning. Almost all pupils were attaining at or above appropriate national levels in reading and writing. Pupils listened attentively in class, showed very good recall of what they had heard, and responded appropriately. Almost all spoke confidently and expressed themselves very well. At P5-P7, pupils could engage in sustained conversation and discussion, giving clear, considered opinions. They read regularly for pleasure and had developed positive attitudes to reading. Pupils in P7 confidently identified aspects of the writer's craft, and responded in a mature and perceptive way to what they had read. From the early stages, written work was carefully presented, with neat handwriting and very good spelling. By P5, pupils wrote at length for a good variety of purposes, and their work was well structured and well planned.

### **Gaelic language**

Pupils in P1 to P3 were making very good progress in Gaelic, which they were learning as their second language. They had a good understanding of the teacher's explanations which were almost wholly in Gaelic. They had acquired a basic vocabulary which allowed them to respond appropriately to the teacher in a range of curricular areas. Some were beginning to use Gaelic in their conversations with each other. Almost all could recognise and read most commonly used words. They were able to follow and understand stories in Gaelic and predict how they might end. Almost all pupils wrote well, with appropriate support, about a range of topics.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. In recent years all pupils at the early stages and most at the middle stages had reached appropriate national levels of attainment. At the upper stages most pupils had attained appropriate national levels and a growing number exceeded these. Those with additional support needs were making appropriate progress. Pupils showed good skills in interpreting information using graphs or bar charts. They were very confident in number and mental calculation. At the early stages, pupils were making sound progress with number bonds. At the middle stages they demonstrated a good knowledge of fractions and digital time. Older pupils were not sufficiently secure in their use of fractions and decimals. They had a good knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shape. At all

stages pupils needed more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in real life situations. They also needed to develop more systematically their skills in problem solving.

## 5. How well are pupils supported?

All staff provided a very good level of support for pupils and were very attentive to their care and welfare. They knew their pupils very well and were committed to ensuring that they felt secure and happy at school. Staff dealt appropriately with pupils' concerns and worries. Appropriate child protection and care and welfare arrangements, including measures to deal with bullying, were in place.

Overall, teachers made a good choice of tasks to support pupils' learning. However, in a few instances, tasks did not build on pupils' previous learning, or were too dependent on published materials. The teacher of learning support carefully identified pupils' additional support needs through regular discussion with class teachers. She worked very effectively with individuals and small groups. She offered appropriate challenge to higher achieving pupils through a very good programme of additional support in English language and mathematics. Her work with younger pupils was of high quality, and pupils benefited from this in their language and number work. The classroom assistant gave very good support and showed initiative in her work with pupils. Outside agencies also provided good support. The school had good arrangements to assist the transfer of children from the nursery to P1 and of pupils from P7 to the secondary school.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation was very good, although the decoration of some outbuildings needed attention. The entrance to the school was bright and welcoming. The corridor and classrooms were enhanced by the high quality displays of pupils' work, and by photographs which celebrated pupils' achievements in music, drama and sport. Pupils in P6 and P7 had provided a very informative display after their successful visit to the Scottish Parliament. The main school building was very well maintained and provided an attractive environment for learning. Security arrangements were appropriate. Resources were in good supply and were well organised. In particular, there were very good resources for technology. The well-maintained playground equipment provided good opportunities for energetic physical play.

<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>Staff provided a very welcoming, supportive and secure environment. Staff morale was high, and relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Pupils were extremely polite and well-behaved, and were supportive and considerate of one another. They cooperated very well in class. Staff and pupils demonstrated a strong sense of pride in their school community. Teachers made very good use of weekly assemblies to provide opportunities for religious observance and for the celebration of success in academic and out-of-school activities. Teachers had very high expectations of behaviour, fairness and tolerance, and pupils responded very well. The school effectively promoted racial equality. Pupils had made significant efforts to raise money for charities, in particular helping communities in Africa. Frequent visits by teachers from other European countries had enhanced pupils' experiences.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and the community</p>	<p>The school had very good links with parents, carers and the local community. Oral and written communication between school and home was frequent and of very high quality. The school's standards and quality reports provided helpful information. Annual reports to parents gave valuable indications of pupils' progress and advice on what they needed to do to improve. The PTA was very supportive. Through its very successful fund-raising activities, it had made significant financial contributions to the school. Parents had willingly given of their time to effect improvements to the school playground, which had benefited all pupils. The school regularly consulted parents on issues which included personal relationships and sensitive matters, and actively sought to involve parents in discussions about the curriculum. Valuable and productive links with external agencies ensured that pupils had appropriate, effective support for aspects of their development. There were good links with the local secondary school. Pupils regularly entertained senior citizens, and contributed significantly, through singing and music-making, to local celebrations.</p>

## 7. Improving the school

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

The school provided a very caring and inclusive environment in which all pupils were valued and respected. Staff worked very effectively to promote tolerance, equality and fairness. All pupils were actively involved in the life of the school. The overall quality of teaching was good, with many examples of very good teaching. Staff supported one another very well and worked very effectively as a team. Standards of attainment were very good in English language and good in mathematics.

The school was well led. The headteacher was committed and dedicated to the work of the school. Her relationships with pupils, parents and staff were very good. She had established and maintained a significant involvement in the arts, drama and music, all of which had enhanced pupils' experiences through a very rich environment. She had ensured that abler pupils in P7 received appropriate additional challenge. However, approaches to monitoring the work of the school were not sufficiently focused. Frequent visits to classes by the headteacher needed to have a clearer agenda to improve teaching. She monitored teachers' work by checking documentation and forward plans, but she needed to give teachers more detailed feedback. Staff did not yet use quality indicators to evaluate their own work. With a clearly formulated agenda, the school's capacity for improvement was good.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to improve learning, teaching and monitoring of the school's work. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- develop further pupils' skills in problem solving and in information and communications technology;
- improve procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school and the quality of learning and teaching; and
- ensure that tasks and activities present sufficient challenge to meet the needs of all pupils.

**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. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Robert E McKinstry  
HM Inspector

30 August 2005

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

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

- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pastoral care
- Accommodation and facilities
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents and the community

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

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

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

- No aspects were found to be in this category

### **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.

<p><b>What pleased parents and carers most</b></p>	<p><b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoyed being at school and found school-work stimulating.</li> <li>• Their children were encouraged to work to the best of their ability.</li> <li>• They were made welcome in the school, and had been told how they could help their children with homework.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern about the children's care and welfare.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and carers had no major concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pleased pupils most</b></p>	<p><b>What pupils would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff dealt effectively with any incidents of bullying.</li> <li>• Teachers listened to what they had to say and helped them when they were having difficulties.</li> <li>• Teachers told them when they had done something well.</li> <li>• The school helped them to keep safe and healthy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils had no major concerns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pleased staff most</b></p>	<p><b>What staff would like to see improved</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff were pleased with all aspects of the work of the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff had no major concerns.</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, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG.

### **Our complaints procedure**

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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

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