

**Teanassie Primary School
and Nursery Class
By Beaully
The Highland Council
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1. Background

Teanassie Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in April and May 2007 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined the quality of the children's experience in the nursery, 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 parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

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

The school serves the rural communities to the west of Beauly, including Kilmorack, Struy and Strathfarrar. At the time of the inspection the roll was 89, including 21 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The positive start to learning made by children in the nursery and pupils in P1/2/3.
- Attention given by all staff to the care and welfare of children and pupils, and the relationships established between and among staff and pupils.
- Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- The commitment and teamwork of staff and the support provided by parents.

3. What are the views of parents, 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. However, where there were fewer than five respondees in a group, in

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

order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided. HM Inspectors also interviewed staff, parents and pupils during the inspection. The following is an analysis of the views expressed by staff, parents and pupils.

All parents were very positive about their child's experience. Parents of children in the nursery class were particularly satisfied. All parents felt welcome, thought that the school had a good reputation in the community and that they received good information about their child's progress. In written comment, parents across the school wanted improvements to the accommodation and in the arrangements for car parking and for dropping off their children. Most pupils enjoyed school, got on easily with others and felt that they were well looked after and safe. All staff enjoyed working in the school and felt they were involved in making decisions about the life and work of the school. They wanted better opportunities for staff development and extended discussion about the school's priorities for improvement. They shared the concerns expressed by parents about a lack of stability in the leadership and staffing of the school.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Overall, the quality of the curriculum was adequate. Staff had allocated additional time to English language, mathematics, and to several other curriculum areas. However, there had been no whole school approach and the additional time had not ensured consistently high standards of attainment in English language and mathematics. Visiting specialist teachers made a useful contribution to the development of pupils' skills in music and physical education. The school had not yet succeeded in always providing two hours of physical education each week for all pupils. The school had achieved Health Promoting Status. Staff had not yet integrated health, and religious and moral education appropriately into the programme for personal and social development. Initiatives to promote education for enterprise, citizenship and Eco Schools Scotland were at a very early stage of development. Staff did not use information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to enhance learning and teaching across the curriculum. At times there were significant technical difficulties in ensuring appropriate access to the Internet. The quality of teaching was adequate. Staff in the nursery class interacted effectively with children. In P1/2/3, staff provided a wide range of interesting and inviting play experiences. Most teachers taught lessons well to the whole class group. They did not always ensure that pupils of different ages and abilities were engaged fully in appropriately challenging activities. Teachers usually shared the aims of lessons with pupils but did not consistently ensure an effective review of what pupils had learned. Most interacted positively with pupils, used questions well and provided helpful oral feedback. In a few lessons, the pace was not appropriately brisk and too much emphasis was placed on whole class activity, or on worksheets or textbooks. There was considerable scope to improve the range and quality of homework.

The quality of pupils' learning was adequate. Children in the nursery class were well motivated, confident, and actively involved in their learning. They had good opportunities to work independently and in groups, and responded well to the choices available to them. They were becoming skilled in using programmable toys and

operating computers. They were interested in investigating their environment and enjoyed caring for plants and wildlife. Many children engaged well in very creative art and craft activities. They were developing a range of appropriate physical skills and enjoyed climbing, jumping and balancing. Across the school, staff had established a positive learning environment. Most pupils were motivated and hardworking. Pupils in P1/2/3 were enthusiastic learners who participated happily in collaborative play. Pupils from P4 to P7 cooperated well in pairs or in small groups on a range of activities but were not always clear about what they were trying to achieve. They worked well together on set tasks and took responsibility for aspects of their own learning. Their skills in taking greater responsibility, being more independent and working on more demanding activities were not sufficiently well developed.

The school had taken good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Children in the nursery class were becoming independent and learning to persevere. All pupils in P6/7 had participated recently in a successful residential visit to an outdoor centre. They recognised that their social skills had developed further and that they had learned more about teamwork and self-reliance. The active pupil council was supported well by staff and made an effective contribution to the life of the school. Pupils were capable of taking a greater lead in planned developments. Representatives had responsibility for selecting the school's contribution to the Highland Year of Culture 2007 and for managing the budget allocated to this event. Recently, the pupil council had arranged for an informative community notice board to be placed outside the school. Many pupils participated at lunchtime or after school in sporting activities such as football, cross-country running and shinty. Some pupils had successfully represented the school in athletics events. The Active Schools Coordinator had provided advice to parents who helped organise sporting activities. Everyone in the nursery and school had been actively involved in a Christmas show which had been choreographed by pupils. Pupils in P4/5/6 were learning about caring for the environment as part of their project on organic gardening.

English language

Children in the nursery class were making very good progress in developing their skills in communication and language. They were confident when talking to one another and to adults. They enjoyed listening to stories and were able to predict and recall events. Most could recognise their name and some were able to write it. In the primary school, the overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. A few pupils, particularly at the early stages, had achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Older, higher attaining pupils were capable of achieving higher standards in reading, and particularly, in writing. Across the school, pupils had well-developed skills in listening and talking to adults, and to each other in groups. Pupils were able to convey information and express their views confidently and clearly. They were developing good skills in presenting talks to an audience. Pupils had very positive attitudes to reading and most read regularly for pleasure. At all stages, almost all pupils read with fluency and good understanding. At the upper stages, pupils used research and reference skills effectively in topic work. Across the school, pupils had good opportunities to write in a range of styles and for a variety of

purposes. They produced high quality writing based on their topic work. Most pupils presented their written work neatly.

Mathematics

Children in the nursery class were making very good progress in developing their mathematical skills. Most were able to sort and match by colour, shape and size. Many could count with confidence and used appropriate mathematical language in play situations. In the primary school, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. At P1 to P3, a significant number of pupils were attaining these levels earlier than might normally be expected. This pace of progress was not sustained. At the middle stages, the pace of pupils' progress to the next level was too slow and a few pupils were uncertain about aspects of work related to their current level of attainment. A number of pupils in P7 were not secure at the level they had attained. Pupils interpreted information from a range of graphs well and were developing appropriate skills in displaying information. Across the school, pupils' skills in using ICT for handling and displaying information were not sufficiently well developed. At all stages, pupils were developing appropriate skills in mental calculation. Most had a good grasp of basic arithmetic processes but were not suitably quick or accurate in their recall of number facts or in explaining how they had worked out their answers. Pupils in the upper stages lacked confidence in working with fractions, percentages and decimals. Most used the twelve- and twenty-four hour clock well. Pupils at the early stages had a good knowledge of appropriate two- and three-dimensional shapes but older pupils were not so competent in recognising relevant shapes. Pupils were not familiar with a range of problem solving strategies.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

In the nursery class, staff were responsive to the needs of individual children. They identified appropriate next steps in learning for individuals and used this information to support their development and progress. Teachers at all stages set interesting tasks for groups of pupils. However, in the middle and upper stages these activities were not always sufficiently well matched to the individual needs of pupils to sustain the pace of progress achieved at the early stages of the school. An improved system to track pupils' progress over time was in place but had yet to be used effectively. Teachers did not consistently share learning targets with pupils. They did not yet involve individuals fully in discussions about what each needed to do to improve the quality of their own work. Pupils were at a very early stage of evaluating their own progress. Higher achieving pupils were not consistently challenged. Arrangements for identifying and referring pupils who needed additional assistance with their learning were informal. The support for learning auxiliary worked very effectively with identified groups of pupils in English language and mathematics. Individualised educational programmes contained specific learning targets and clear success criteria. These were shared with parents and reviewed regularly. Overall, staff met the additional learning needs of pupils well.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Staff provided a very good level of pastoral care for pupils. They had developed a strong sense of community and knew pupils well. Appropriate child protection, anti-bullying, anti-racist and safe use of the Internet policies were in place, known and implemented appropriately by staff. Staff had still to be trained in racial equality, and a training update on child protection was planned. The school actively promoted a healthy lifestyle. Children in the nursery class enjoyed healthy snack options of milk, fruit and cereal, and all pupils in P1/2/3 received free fruit daily. There was scope to improve school lunches. Food varied in quality, vegetables were overcooked and the level of waste was high. Pupils were positively encouraged to be energetic in physical education, in the playground and in short, active sessions during lessons. Parents were well informed about the school's approach to education about sensitive health issues. The playground was not always supervised by staff. Pupils in P7 looked after younger pupils in the playground and acted as buddies for them.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The accommodation had important weaknesses. The main school building and the three demountable classrooms had appropriate security measures in place, were in a good state of repair and decoration, and had good access for the disabled. Heating was difficult to control and classrooms were often too warm or too cold. Space in the canteen for the number of pupils taking lunch was limited. The nursery and all classrooms were of a good size and staff used the space well for learning and teaching. Only two of the demountables had toilets. Staff, office and storage space were very limited. There was no suitably large area indoors for whole school assemblies or physical education. The playground, playing field and grassed areas were in very poor condition. Space for parents to drop off children was very limited.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The school was very welcoming of parents and visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good and most pupils were courteous and well behaved. Pupils and staff were proud of the school. Staff used praise well to motivate and encourage pupils. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' attainment and application were not yet consistently high. The school held regular assemblies to celebrate pupils' successes and further improvements were planned. There were appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Pupils recognised that they were treated fairly in a positive climate. Staff did not actively promote ethnic or religious diversity through the curriculum.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had good relationships with parents and the local community. Teachers provided parents with helpful written reports about their children's progress. These also gave helpful advice about how parents could support their children's learning at home. Parents helped willingly with sports activities and fundraising events. The School Board and PTA gave very valuable support to the school and contributed very positively to improvements to the school's environment. Recently, parents and local contractors had worked energetically with staff and pupils to develop the school gardens. The school had developed useful links with a local outdoor centre to enhance the environmental studies programme. Pupils in P6/7 had recently organised and presented a successful show for senior citizens. Arrangements to support children's transfer from the nursery class into the school and for the transfer of P7 pupils to secondary school were well planned and organised. The school had good pastoral links with Charleston Academy. Staff were in the process of establishing curricular links with other local schools to enhance pupils' achievements.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Teanassie Primary School provided a supportive learning environment in which pupils were well behaved and had positive attitudes to their learning. There was scope for staff to ensure improvement in the quality of attainment in English language and in mathematics. The school should build more effectively on the progress achieved by pupils at the early stages and ensure greater challenge and a faster pace of learning for all pupils.

The headteacher had taken up his appointment two weeks prior to the inspection. He had demonstrated sound professional skills, energy and enthusiasm, and was taking stock before formulating future plans. During a protracted period of instability in the leadership of the school and regular changes in the working arrangements of part-time staff, teachers had worked together very well in a close and supportive team. Commendably, with the support of education authority staff, they had used their initiative to take and implement decisions about activities and events, and to organise whole school developments. They had lacked sufficiently clear strategic direction about improvements to the curriculum and pupils' learning. Staff had improved self-evaluation procedures and surveyed the views of parents and pupils through questionnaires. The information gained from tracking pupils' progress was not used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. While progress had been made in developing self-evaluation procedures, these had yet to have an impact on improving the overall work of the school. Existing procedures for self-evaluation were not well enough developed. They were not sufficiently systematic and rigorous to ensure appropriate pace and challenge in pupils' learning experiences, and to improve attainment. The appointment of a permanent headteacher provided the school with the vision and direction necessary to build on the existing good practice and improve further the overall work of the school.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve learning, teaching and meeting needs. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve the curriculum;
- improve the pace and challenge of pupils' learning;
- improve self-evaluation procedures, and focus particularly on improving pupils' attainment and progress;
- promote awareness of ethnic and religious diversity;
- ensure stability in the school's staffing arrangements; and
- as funds allow, improve aspects of the accommodation.

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. 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, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Christine Roebuck
HM Inspector

28 August 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 good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	adequate
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	adequate

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate

How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	weak
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	weak
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership across the school	adequate
Self-evaluation	weak

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

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below. Where any one group had five or less respondees then, in order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided helpful information about their child's progress. • Showed care and concern for their child's welfare. • Parents' evenings. • Treated their child fairly. • Dealt well with inappropriate behaviour. • Encouraged mutual respect between pupils and teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide better information about the school's educational priorities. • Make clear the standards of work expected from pupils.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped them when they were having difficulty. • Expected them to work hard. • Looked after them if they were upset. • Dealt well with any instances of bullying. • Listened to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the behaviour of other pupils.

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, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8371. 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 Unit, 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@sps.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.sps.org.uk.

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