

**Beancross Primary School  
Grangemouth  
Falkirk Council  
7 October 2008**

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## 1. Background

Beancross Primary School was inspected in May 2008 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 innovation, and its 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 Parent Council, and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

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 part of the town of Grangemouth. At the time of the inspection the roll was 221. 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. At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for ten weeks. The post had previously been filled on a temporary basis by an acting headteacher for 14 months.

The deputy headteacher was appointed a week prior to the inspection.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Staff commitment to pupils' care and welfare.
- Supportive teamwork among staff and the school's welcoming ethos.
- Productive involvement of parents in the life of the school.
- Commitment of the headteacher and staff towards improving the work of the school.

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

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

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

Parents were positive about most aspects of the work of the school. They felt welcome and thought staff showed care and concern for their child's welfare. They found parents' evenings helpful and informative and thought school reports gave helpful information about their child's progress. A significant number of parents did not think the school had a good reputation in the community. Pupils believed the school helped to keep them safe and healthy. They felt teachers explained things clearly to them and they liked the way teachers told them when they had done something well. A number of pupils expressed concern about the poor behaviour of other pupils. Teachers and support staff liked working in the school and felt pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. They thought pupils' successes were celebrated regularly. A significant number of staff believed indiscipline could be dealt with more effectively.

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

#### **Learners' experiences**

The overall quality of the curriculum was satisfactory. Staff provided pupils with a broad curriculum. The school was making improvements to programmes for religious and moral education and English language. However, some aspects of the curriculum such as environmental studies did not provide sufficient continuity and progression in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Across the school, pupils had regular opportunities to develop their skills in information and communications technology (ICT). They had a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles. Pupils in P1 benefitted from increased opportunities to be active in their learning through play. There were regular opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in enterprise education. For example, pupils at P7 created a cookbook using healthy recipes. Across the school, there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in physical education. The quality of teaching was satisfactory. In most lessons, teachers created a positive climate for learning. They gave clear explanations and instructions and used questioning well to help pupils to recall knowledge and information. They did not always use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking. A few teachers shared the purposes of lessons with pupils. However, this was not consistent across the school. Pupils were not always encouraged to take sufficient responsibility for their learning. Teachers were beginning to use interactive whiteboards well to enhance pupils' learning. They provided a varied range of homework activities to support pupils' learning.

In most lessons, pupils were well behaved and worked on tasks without close supervision. Pupils responded enthusiastically to opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups. For example, pupils in P1 worked well together when completing a variety of practical activities to consolidate their numeracy skills. Overall, pupils' skills in working collaboratively were not sufficiently well developed. Pupils did not have enough opportunities to be active in their learning to develop their skills as independent learners.

They were not always aware of their strengths as learners and did not understand fully how to improve their work.

### **Improvements in performance**

Improvements in the school's performance were weak. Following a period of instability, staff had started to make improvements to the work of the school. These improvements had not yet had an impact on improving the overall quality of learner's experiences. As a result, pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to achieve widely.

The overall quality of attainment in English language was satisfactory. Levels of attainment had fluctuated in recent years. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels in listening and talking and a majority achieved appropriate national levels in reading and writing. A significant number achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Progress at the early stages was not always sustained as pupils moved through the school. Pupils with additional support needs were making progress in their classwork. Across the school, most pupils listened and responded well to teachers. Most pupils showed confidence in talking and expressing their views to adults and peers, but were less confident in addressing larger groups. In P6/7, pupils displayed good listening skills in responding to unfamiliar texts. Across the school, pupils were less skilled when listening and talking to each other in groups. At the early stages, pupils were able to talk appropriately about the features of stories they had read. From P4 to P7 the majority of pupils read fluently and could discuss favourite authors and features of books they enjoyed. At P1, pupils were developing early writing skills and, as they progressed through the stages, pupils were gaining in confidence in writing for a range of purposes. High standards of writing were not, however, consistently demonstrated across other areas of the curriculum. Overall, the quality of spelling and punctuation was variable across the school.

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was satisfactory. Levels of attainment had remained steady in recent years. Most pupils attained appropriate national levels of attainment. By P2, a significant number of pupils had attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected. This progress was not maintained as pupils progressed through the school. Pupils who required additional support with aspects of mathematics were making steady progress. By P7, pupils could interpret information from a range of charts and graphs. They were able to gather information and present it in different ways. However, they did not have enough opportunities to use ICT to create spreadsheets and databases. Across the school, pupils were developing good skills in mental calculations. At the early stages, pupils were making good progress in written calculations involving number, money and measurement. By P7, there were gaps in pupils' understanding of several areas of mathematics, including measurement, fractions and percentages. Pupils did not yet have sufficient planned opportunities to apply and develop their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils had a sound knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. By P7, pupils could identify a range of angles and demonstrated a good understanding of bearings. Across the school, pupils' skills in solving problems were less well developed.

At P1, pupils could use appropriate vocabulary to describe different types of houses and homes. Pupils at P6/7 were developing an awareness of rock formation and were

able to classify rocks appropriately. At P3, pupils were developing their knowledge of famous artists. At the upper stages, pupils along with a cluster school, had participated in a week of activities delivered by health promotion staff which promoted aspects of healthy lifestyles. As a result, pupils had a very good awareness of the need for a balanced diet.

The school had taken some steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Through the school programme, sports day and after school clubs, pupils were achieving success in a range of sports, for example, in football, basketball and cross-country running. All pupils at the upper stages gained confidence and a sense of achievement through performing in the annual school show. Pupils at P7 developed and displayed their ICT skills in producing an inter-active yearbook. Pupils had opportunities to develop their skills in problem solving when attending the lunchtime problem solving club. The school's problem solving team entered for a national enterprising challenge and were very successful in reaching the final. Pupils had some opportunities to develop their skills and achieve success in citizenship through participating in the school council and eco committee. School captains acting as corridor monitors were recently given greater responsibility to promote more positive behaviour amongst the younger pupils.

The current improvement plan had been written prior to the present headteacher taking up post. The school had made some progress in addressing the priorities in its improvement plan, including ICT and health education. Overall, the improvement plan did not have sufficient impact on improving attainment and learners' experiences across the school. Staff had not yet been fully engaged in rigorous self-evaluation to secure improvements in the work of the school. Parents were not sufficiently involved in identifying priorities for the school improvement plan. The headteacher, in collaboration with staff, was committed to improving the work of the school.

## **5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?**

Arrangements for meeting pupils' needs were weak. In too many lessons, the learning activities and teaching approaches were not suitably matched to the differing needs and abilities of individual pupils. Teachers did not always provide sufficient challenge for pupils to reach their full potential. The school had good procedures in place to identify pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning. They had drafted appropriate individual and group educational support plans. There were good links with other agencies to provide additional advice and support. These plans were making a significant impact on pupils' progress but there were weaknesses in implementing and reviewing plans. The support for learning teacher and learning assistants provided good support for individuals and small groups of pupils. However, too often, pupils were withdrawn from class for this support and this reduced their inclusion in class activities and the class teachers' ability to support their progress. Plans were not reviewed regularly enough and parents and pupils were not sufficiently involved in the planning and review processes. The school had not yet devised support plans for pupils experiencing behavioural difficulties or for those who were missing out on education through poor attendance patterns.

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

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school had good arrangements in place for the care, welfare and development of pupils. Staff knew pupils well and were aware of their emotional, physical and social needs. The school had made a positive start to improving procedures to deal more effectively with instances of bullying behaviour and this was beginning to have a positive impact. The school had an appropriate policy for child protection and staff were aware of their responsibilities, although they had not all yet received training. Pupils felt safe and well looked after in school. They knew what they should do if they were upset. The school worked well with other agencies to promote healthy lifestyles, including catering staff, local supermarkets and health promotion staff. As a result pupils had very good awareness about the main concepts of healthy eating and confidently discussed different food groups. Procedures to monitor pupil absence required review. There were well-planned activities in place for pupils entering P1. The school had regular contact with staff from Grangemouth High School to ensure very effective transition for pupils at P7.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The overall management and use of resources and space for learning was good. The school had a good range of resources to support learning and teaching. Pupils benefitted from a large playground area which included grass, tarmac and seating. There was scope to make more use of the outside environment to enhance pupils' learning experiences. The school was clean and well maintained. A wide range of pupils' work was effectively displayed around the school. The school had made good use of available space to create an ICT suite, a library and music and art rooms. However, the organisation of furniture in some classrooms did not promote pupils' working together on tasks and activities. Recent improvements to the arrangements in the dining area at lunch time had resulted in a more positive experience for pupils. Appropriate security arrangements were in place. Access for those with restricted mobility was limited to the ground floor of the building.</p>

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	<p>Pupils and staff were proud of their school. Staff worked well together to create a welcoming environment. Relationships between staff and pupils were positive. Most pupils were well behaved and polite. On occasions, some pupils' behaviour in class disrupted the learning of others. The school was aware of the need to develop a consistent approach to promoting positive behaviour across the school. Assemblies provided increased opportunities to celebrate pupils' achievements. Teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment and achievement were not always high enough. Staff were aware of issues of racial equality but had not yet received appropriate training. Most pupils felt they were treated fairly in the school. Pupils had the opportunity to learn about different cultures through aspects of the curriculum, including environmental studies and religious and moral education. However, the promotion of cultural diversity was not yet embedded within the work of the school. There were regular opportunities for religious observance.</p>
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families was good. Parents felt welcome in the school. The Parent Council was supportive of the school. Newsletters provided parents with helpful information about the work of the school. Parents attended school events, including assemblies and school shows. They were consulted appropriately on sensitive aspects of health education. The Friends of Beancross group was actively involved in raising funds to support school activities. Parents were informed about pupils' progress through parent meetings and helpful written reports. The school was developing ways of improving its reputation in the community and had positive links with a variety of agencies, including community police and health staff. Overall, the school did not yet provide sufficient opportunities for parents to be actively involved in their child's learning.</p>

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

Beancross Primary School provided a caring and supportive environment for pupils. Pupils and staff were proud of their school. The school recognised the need to review aspects of the curriculum to ensure continuity and progression of pupils' skills.

Teaching and learners' experiences were satisfactory. There was scope to improve pupils' attainment by providing them with greater challenge. Overall, tasks and activities were not always matched well enough to pupils' learning needs and pupils were not sufficiently actively involved in their learning.

In her very short time in post, the headteacher had identified appropriate areas for improvement. She had a clear vision for the school and recognised the need to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning. She had started to improve aspects of discipline and behaviour and this was beginning to have a positive impact. The headteacher had taken appropriate account of the views of staff and improved communication within the school. She had increased opportunities for pupils at the upper stages to have responsibility around the school and had improved arrangements in the dining hall at lunchtime to enhance pupils' social experiences. The newly appointed deputy headteacher and principal teacher were supportive of the headteacher. Following advice from education services, staff had successfully improved the health education programme. This had improved pupils' learning experiences and resulted in the school gaining health promoting accreditation. Staff worked well together as a team and were committed to improving the work of the school. The school's arrangements for evaluating its work had important weaknesses. Staff had not been sufficiently involved in self-evaluation. Forward plans were monitored and a few classroom observations had taken place this year. However, this had not led to significant improvements in teaching and learning. The school did not yet use information from assessment effectively enough to track pupils' progress and ensure improvement in attainment. With further support from the education authority, the school had the capacity for improvement.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to ensure improvements in performance. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to improve the quality of the curriculum to ensure pupils' learning builds appropriately on their prior knowledge;
- improve approaches to teaching and learning, including opportunities for more active learning and collaborative work across the school;
- meet pupils' learning needs more effectively; and
- improve approaches for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and tracking pupils' progress in order to raise attainment.

### **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 another report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Janie McManus  
HM Inspector

7 October 2008

## 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.

<b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	
The curriculum	satisfactory
Teaching for effective learning	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Improvements in performance	weak

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting learning needs	weak

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Care, welfare and development	good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	satisfactory
Equality and fairness	satisfactory
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Developing people and partnerships	satisfactory
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	satisfactory
Improvement through 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
satisfactory	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.

<b>What parents thought the school did well</b>	<b>What parents think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment.</li> <li>• School buildings were kept in good order.</li> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome.</li> <li>• The school explained how parents could support their child with their homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve its reputation in the community.</li> <li>• Deal more effectively with inappropriate behaviour.</li> </ul>
<b>What pupils thought the school did well</b>	<b>What pupils think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could.</li> <li>• Teachers helped them if they were having difficulty with their work.</li> <li>• Teachers were good at letting them know how their learning could be improved.</li> <li>• Pupils got on well with each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the behaviour of some pupils.</li> <li>• A few pupils would like a say in deciding how to make the school better.</li> </ul>

<b>What staff thought the school did well</b>	<b>What staff think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community.</li> <li>• Teachers ensured pupils received constructive feedback about their work.</li> <li>• Teachers thought there was effective communication between senior managers and staff.</li> <li>• The school communicated clearly to parents the standard of work expected from pupils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deal with indiscipline more effectively and consistently.</li> <li>• Make more effective use of staff training time.</li> <li>• Provide more opportunities for support staff to be involved in decision making.</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, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure**

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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](mailto: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](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 (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](mailto:ask@sps.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.sps.org.uk](http://www.sps.org.uk).

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