

**Bankier Primary School  
Bonnybridge  
Falkirk Council  
28 March 2006**

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## 1. Background

Bankier Primary School was inspected in November 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 parent-teacher association (PTA), 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 the village of Banknock and the surrounding area of Hags, Coney Park and Longcroft. At the time of the inspection the roll was 196. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with 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.

- Well behaved and polite pupils who were motivated to learn.
- The commitment of the headteacher and staff in providing high quality pastoral care and effective teaching for pupils.
- Very effective links with parents and the local community.
- Very good opportunities for the development of pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT).
- The school's commitment to environmental and enterprise education.
- Joint working with catering staff to provide good quality, healthy lunches within an enhanced dining room environment.

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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, pupils and staff were very pleased with almost all aspects of the work of the school. All parents thought that the school treated their children fairly. They felt very welcome in school and thought that the school had a good reputation in the community. Parents thought they received useful information about their children's progress from parents' evenings and school reports. Pupils were happy with life at school and felt safe and valued. All pupils interviewed thought that staff knew them well and they were treated fairly. The pupils on the pupil council enjoyed this responsibility and felt that staff listened to their ideas and suggestions. Staff thought that there was effective team working in the school. They believed the school dealt with discipline effectively and that the behaviour of pupils was very good. Support staff, however, felt that communication in the school could be improved.

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

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

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. Teachers made good use of flexibility time in the curriculum to provide additional time for writing and mathematics which had led to an improvement in attainment in these areas. Following consultation with parents, the school had reviewed its curriculum. This allowed the school to give a greater focus in the curriculum to the development of real life experiences such as environmental and enterprise education. The headteacher and staff should continue to monitor the balance of activities, particularly at the early stages, to ensure a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils in P6 and P7 were making very good progress in learning French. Visiting teachers ensured pupils received good, progressive experiences in art and design and in physical education. Teachers paid good attention to developing healthy attitudes with good opportunities for pupils to learn about diet and healthy eating. Overall, the quality of teaching was very good. Teachers gave clear explanations and made effective use of praise to develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning. They shared the purpose of lessons with pupils and checked their understanding at the end of lessons. Teachers made effective use of interactive whiteboards to enhance the quality of teaching. Homework was used well to support pupils' learning.

The quality of pupils' learning was good. Almost all pupils were motivated and keen to learn. At most stages pupils responded confidently when working collaboratively in pairs and small groups. In P4, pupils worked very well together in purposeful activities when editing each other's writing and in P6 when designing a poster for a school concert. However, this practice was not consistent across the school. Pupils' learning would be enhanced if they were given more opportunities to work free from an over-reliance on published texts and worksheets. At all stages, pupils' skills in enterprise were developing well. All classes had set up a variety of activities to produce items for the Christmas Fair. Pupils in P5 showed a good understanding of

other world religions. At P1 to P3, pupils were able to sing confidently and tunefully. The school had introduced appropriate opportunities for pupils in P1 to learn through play. The school should now improve the range of play activities provided to increase challenge and extend such opportunities to include all pupils at the early stages.

Staff provided pupils with a wide range of opportunities to achieve and to develop responsible attitudes. At all stages, pupils demonstrated a good understanding of issues related to developing healthy lifestyles. Pupils were learning important citizenship skills by serving on the pupil council and expressing their views on school life. They were developing very useful skills in learning about the environment and had successfully achieved two green flags as part of the Eco School programme. Pupils worked very well in Eco School committees and were involved in activities related to re-cycling, saving energy, and litter awareness. They had surveyed pupils' views on healthy living and favourite types of fruit to be sold at the tuck-shop. Commendably, pupils attended school board meetings to talk about their Eco School activities. Pupils participated actively in a very wide range of out-of-school learning activities, including a very popular cheerleading club. At all stages, pupils were developing a sense of audience through participating in concerts.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. There had been a notable improvement in attainment over the last three years. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels in listening and talking, reading and writing. A significant number of pupils attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected in reading and writing. Across the school, pupils with additional support needs were making very good progress with their classwork. At all stages, almost all pupils listened well, were confident at talking and participated well during class lessons. Most pupils had well-developed reading skills and were able to read accurately and with confidence. Pupils in P1 to P3 read with good expression and understanding. At P7, pupils could identify the main ideas in stories and reflect on the writer's style. Pupils were confident in working with different types of texts, for example poetry. Across the school, pupils planned and produced some interesting writing. At P4-P7, their imaginative stories showed good development of character and plot. Pupils' attainment in writing would be further enhanced with increased opportunities to write and share the writing with an audience.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Over the last three years attainment had improved. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels and a number were achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. At P3, all pupils were achieving national levels of attainment. At all stages, pupils could interpret information from appropriate graphs. However, their skills in organising and presenting data using graphs, spreadsheets and databases were less well developed. Pupils' understanding of number, money and measurement was very good. Across the school pupils were confident in mental and written calculations. They made good use of their knowledge of number and measurement in their work on enterprise. Most pupils had a sound understanding of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. At all stages pupils were developing appropriate skills in problem solving and

were able to use these in practical situations. At most stages the standard of presentation in pupils' written work was very good.

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

The overall quality of pastoral care was very good. All staff were familiar with the school's arrangements to ensure the care, welfare and protection of pupils. They were very successful in meeting pupils' social, emotional and physical needs. Staff knew pupils well and were sensitive to individual needs and circumstances. Catering staff worked closely with the headteacher to promote the good quality school lunches. They encouraged pupils to make healthy choices and try new dishes. Teachers and support staff set high standards for pupil behaviour and successfully promoted positive behaviour in class and around the school. Pupils felt safe and cared for at school and knew where to go for help. Class representatives took any concerns to the headteacher through the pupil council and any issues raised were addressed appropriately. Effective procedures were in place for pupils entering P1 and P7 pupils transferring to Denny High School.

The school provided good support to all pupils. Staff employed a range of strategies to ensure the needs of pupils were well met, including the tracking and monitoring of pupils' attainment. Teachers made good provision for pupils with differing abilities. At most stages, tasks were well matched to pupils' needs. The learning support teacher provided very good support to pupils who were experiencing difficulties in their learning. She worked effectively with individuals and small groups. The school now needed to ensure that she had more opportunities to work alongside teachers in the classrooms. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) had been developed effectively to help support pupils with a range of needs. The clear learning targets in IEPs were shared with pupils and parents. The school effectively sought and used advice from the education authority and other agencies to support pupils with additional support needs.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Overall, the accommodation was good and well maintained. Classrooms were bright and provided a stimulating environment for learning. Staff made very good use of all available space. The dining hall provided a comfortable dining experience for pupils. The playground was adequate for the number of pupils in the school. It had been developed in recent years to include well-used playground games. The school had a very well-stocked reference library which was used effectively by pupils. Facilities and resources for the development of pupils' ICT skills were of high quality and used very well. Toilet provision for P4 and P5 pupils needed upgrading. Security arrangements were appropriate. The building was fully accessible to disabled users.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Staff had developed a supportive, welcoming environment in school. Pupils were well behaved and courteous. All staff, including visiting teachers and support staff worked well as a team. The pupil council, which included representatives from all stages, met regularly and pupils were able to express their views on aspects of school life. Regular and effective consultation with pupils about school lunches had helped pupils to form positive views about the quality of the lunchtime experience. All staff expected pupils to be well behaved, responsible and polite in school. Staff treated pupils fairly, and pupils were considerate in their dealings with each other. Staff actively promoted pupils' understanding of race equality. Weekly whole-school assemblies allowed staff and pupils to celebrate success. The school provided appropriate opportunities for religious observance.</p>

Aspect	Comment
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Partnership with parents and the community	Relationships between parents, the community and the school were very good. Parents received helpful reports on their children’s progress and regular informative newsletters from the school. Sensitive aspects of health education were discussed with parents. The School Board assisted the school by consulting widely with parents on all aspects of school life. Parents were kept well informed about the work of the School Board. The PTA was very supportive of the school and PTA activities provided a very good link between the school and the community. Members of the community were regularly invited into the school for school concerts. The school had active links with the local community through projects such as the Banknock, Haggs and Longcroft Sports and Leisure Initiative and the Bankier Youth Initiative. The school was also involved in the creation of a play park for the village.
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## 7. Improving the school

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

Bankier Primary School provided a good quality of education for its pupils. Pupils’ attainment in English language and mathematics was good and improving. The school had worked very effectively with parents and the local community to establish a very caring environment for pupils. Provision for the development of ICT skills was very good. The quality of teaching was very good and pupils were effectively developing positive attitudes to learning. Support staff contributed very effectively to the life of the school. The headteacher provided very good leadership. She was highly committed to the school and had established very good relationships with parents, pupils and staff. She had well-developed interpersonal skills and communicated effectively about the school’s work. There was a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. The depute headteacher provided effective support to the headteacher. They both worked very well together as the senior management team. A new principal teacher had recently been appointed and was about to take up post.

The overall arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school were good. The headteacher had developed a range of procedures, including monitoring teachers’ plans and providing them with oral and written feedback. She regularly sampled pupils’ work, visited classes and monitored pupils’ progress in English language and mathematics. She now needed to focus more on evaluating pupils’ learning experiences in the classroom. She should use this information to evaluate recent developments in the curriculum and to monitor the pace of change. Bankier Primary School has a strong capacity to improve and with the continuing support of the education authority should continue to do so.

<b>Main points for action</b>
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The school and education authority should take action to improve learning and attainment. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to monitor recent changes made to the balance of the curriculum to ensure full impact on pupils' learning particularly at the early stages;
- continue to enhance pupils' learning experiences and attainment in English language and mathematics by offering more opportunities for pupils to be independent in their own learning and to work collaboratively; and
- further develop opportunities for pupils at the early stages to learn through play.

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

Alan Urquhart  
HM Inspector

28 March 2006

## 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>	
Structure of the curriculum	Good
The teaching process	Very good
Pupils' learning experiences	Good
Pupils' attainment in English language	Good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	Good

<b>How well are pupils supported?</b>	
Pastoral care	Very good
Meeting pupils' needs	Good

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Accommodation and facilities	Good
Climate and relationships	Very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	Very good
Equality and fairness	Very good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	Very good

<b>Improving the school</b>	
Leadership	Very good
Self-evaluation	Good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
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.

<p><b>What parents thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What parents think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome in the school and there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils.</li> <li>• The school was well led and had a good reputation in the community.</li> <li>• Pupils found the work stimulating and enjoyed being at school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents felt the school was not good at consulting them on decisions which affected their child or explaining its priorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pupils thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What pupils think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoyed being at school and teachers knew them well.</li> <li>• They felt safe and looked after and knew what to do if they got upset.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few pupils would like to see some other pupils behave better.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What staff thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What staff think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were positive relationships with parents and the community.</li> <li>• Staff set high standards for attainment and the school provided high quality care and welfare for all of its all pupils.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few support staff would like more effective communication amongst staff.</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, Wellgate House (Level 5), The Wellgate, Dundee DD1 2DB or by telephoning 01382 224155. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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

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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 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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