

**Beatlie School  
Livingston  
West Lothian Council  
6 December 2005**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Key strengths</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. How well are pupils supported?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6. How good is the environment for learning?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7. Improving the school</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Indicators of quality</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>How can you contact us?</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1. Background

Beatlie school was inspected in September 2005 as part of a national sample of provision for pupils with additional support needs. 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 pupils' attainment and achievement in communication and language, understanding and relating to the environment and personal and social education.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff. Members of the inspection team also met representatives of the parent-staff association (PSA), and a group of parents. There was no School Board.

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 provides education for nursery, primary and secondary age pupils with a wide range of additional support needs arising from complex difficulties, sensory impairments and physical disabilities. The work of the nursery was not inspected. The school is located in the town of Livingston and serves West Lothian. One other education authority had placed a pupil in the school. At the time of the inspection there were 30 pupils organised in five classes. Seventeen pupils had Records of Needs. Due to the nature of pupils' complex needs, all were provided with free school meals. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The commitment and caring approach of staff and the quality of their relationships with pupils.
- The strong sense of fairness and equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Access to the specialist facilities in the school which provided pupils with a range of motivating experiences.
- Good use of the local and wider community to provide stimulating social opportunities.

### **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.

Half of the parents returned the questionnaires. Almost all those who did were very positive about the school. They believed their children enjoyed being at school and that staff made them feel welcome when they visited the school. Some parents said they were unhappy that the length of the school week for secondary pupils was shorter than that in mainstream schools. They also felt they did not have sufficient information about the curriculum. Pupils who had been supported to complete parts of the questionnaires said that teachers explained things clearly. They also believed that teachers listened to what they had to say. Teachers and support staff felt they showed care and concern for pupils. They also believed that they worked hard to promote good relations with the local community. However, most teachers and support staff felt that senior managers in post prior to the new session had not worked well as a team nor had there been effective communication between senior managers and staff.

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

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

The overall quality of the curriculum was weak. The school took some account of 5-14 national guidelines which they elaborated to meet pupils' needs. Some teachers effectively used themes to provide coherence to the curriculum. At the senior stages, a few pupils had some opportunities to undertake National Qualifications at Access Level 1. Pupils enjoyed relevant experiences which included soft-play, multi-sensory activities, riding, swimming, relaxation in the jacuzzi, music and drumming. They had particularly benefited from a range of enterprising activities. However, the programmes for communication and language and for understanding and relating to the environment were not sufficiently developed to ensure breadth and balance across these curricular areas. Programmes to develop pupils' functional movement and improve their personal and social skills were at a very early stage and did not ensure pupils' skills were developed from stage to stage. The school had no planned programme to support pupils' use of augmentative alternative communication (AAC) or to improve pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT). The shortened length of the school week in comparison with that of mainstream schools reduced the amount that pupils could learn. Teachers used a range of well-judged teaching approaches across the school and worked hard at providing creative and motivating activities. Some staff carefully checked pupils' understanding and almost all provided clear instructions. The school had some good approaches to homework to reinforce pupils' learning. The school used a range of alternative communication methods. However, these were mostly restricted to supporting pupils to move from task to task and did not provide them with useful functional language. Teachers were unable to plan consistently because of the lack of appropriate curricular programmes. Some lessons lacked focus and teachers did not always make clear what was being taught and learned. Overall, pupils' learning was not being systematically developed.

Group activities in some classes were stimulating. In those classes pupils participated well and showed good ability, for example in the multi-sensory room, in interacting with adults and on occasions with their peers. In music, some pupils showed good skills in using

instruments to keep a rhythm. In art, pupils were using a range of equipment, and were experiencing different textures and colours. Where teachers provided appropriate visual or sensory stimuli, pupils showed good understanding of the concepts hot and cold, and happy and sad. Pupils' communication during a 'good morning' session was effectively aided by a switch device with a message from the pupil's parent. Visits in the local community were particularly valuable in extending pupils' experiences and in practising real life skills of personal safety and awareness of others. However, the pace of many lessons was often too slow and the frequent late arrival of transport resulted in loss of teaching time for many pupils. The period after lunchtime was not stimulating and did not provide pupils with sufficient learning opportunities. The limited use of AAC prevented some pupils from taking more responsibility. Teachers tried to provide pupils with a choice of activities. However, their explanations of available choices were not always sufficiently clear to ensure that the pupil's choices were well judged. At the senior stages pupils' experiences were not always appropriate for their age and stage. They did not have sufficient opportunities to access the wider community and take greater responsibilities in preparation for leaving school.

### **Communication and language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment and achievement in communication and language was unsatisfactory. Many pupils did not have sufficiently effective ways of communicating their basic needs and wishes and required a more consistent approach to developing any possible means of communication. There were too few early literacy strategies particularly at the secondary stages. Some pupils were interested in books and enjoyed their visits to the local library to choose their texts. However, this aspect of language was not sufficiently well developed across the school. Approaches to developing early writing skills were limited. In some instances, teachers restricted work in communication and language to individual sessions rather than providing effective and motivating group work to develop pupils' interactive and functional language. Opportunities for teachers to work effectively with speech and language therapists were limited. They did not work together to plan pupils' individualised educational programmes (IEPs) or jointly agree appropriate targets. Pupils' language skills were not systematically developed in different situations across the school and did not promote their sense of independence.

### **Understanding and relating to the environment**

The quality of pupils' achievement in understanding and relating to the environment (URE) was weak. Pupils had access to some suitable activities in science, mathematics and social subjects. They were gaining a good practical understanding of the links between money, shopping and cooking. At all stages pupils had an awareness and some understanding of the effect of using switches in the multisensory and softplay rooms. However, these skills were not being further developed through, for example, the use of switched toys. Pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to learn about space, time and measurement. Not all staff referred to national guidelines when devising activities and pupils' skills were not being systematically developed. Inadequate approaches to assessing pupils' progress and inappropriate URE targets made it difficult to evaluate pupils' achievements and ensure consistent challenge. Pupils' learning was not extended through use of appropriate ICT programmes.

## **Personal and social education**

All pupils were making good progress in achieving levels of confidence during the lunch session which was well-organised, happy and relaxed. Pupils were encouraged and showed ability to make choices at lunchtime and breaks. At the early stages, almost all pupils confidently welcomed visitors and were keen to demonstrate what they could do. Trips to the local shopping mall helped pupils become familiar with their local environment and provided safe opportunities to meet others in the community. Pupils at the early stages responded well when given support to practise personal care routines. The active experiences such as riding, multi-sensory, soft play and use of the jacuzzi were developing pupils' self esteem and promoted very good intensive interaction with adults. A few pupils showed empathy for their friends and encouraged them in their activities. The school had undertaken very successful enterprise activities which provided pupils with opportunities to design and make bookmarks, scones and tie and dye t-shirts. They shared their successes with parents, members of the community and pupils from other schools. Senior pupils were supported in undertaking hair washing, and nail and foot care. However, the overall progress of pupils' personal and social development (PSD) could not be effectively evaluated because the school had no formal programme which ensured progression from stage to stage. Some important aspects of PSD, such as personal care and safe relationships were not consistently taught. The school nurses did not contribute to the programme. Senior pupils had no additional responsibilities within the school or links with colleges or other adult services. They had not received support from a careers officer. The overall quality of personal and social education was adequate.

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

The quality of approaches to pastoral care was good. Staff showed a high level of caring and concern for pupils' physical, medical and social needs. Pupils' medication and specialist nutrition needs were appropriately described within care plans drawn up by nurses who worked in the school. The acting headteacher had ensured that all staff were clear about procedures in relation to child protection. School meals were of a good quality. Daily snacks took good account of healthy eating and were often linked to curricular activities. Staff undertook manual and hoist handling of pupils very well, recognising pupils' dignity. The school had an excellent range of regularly-maintained appropriate seating and other specialised equipment. However, not all staff had received training in manual handling techniques, and risk assessments in relation to moving pupils were not all up-to-date. Aspects of personal care were attended to very well. Staff now needed to work with therapists to progressively plan pupils' eating, drinking, toileting and other personal care procedures and support pupils to take maximum responsibility in relation to their own care.

The school provided a range of support to meet pupils' needs. Each class team, consisting of a teacher, nursery nurse and classroom assistants, held useful weekly meetings to review pupils' progress and share support strategies. Staff worked hard to meet pupils' needs. However, the range of needs within each class was frequently too diverse to ensure individual needs could be effectively met. Additional specialist support was provided by visiting teachers for hearing and visual impairment and a music therapist. However, teachers and therapists did not work together systematically to assess pupils' needs and plan how to meet them. The quality of the school's management of Records of Needs was poor and did not always ensure that pupils received the provision outlined within their Record. Pupils' IEPs were generally not well developed and did not ensure that support was

effectively coordinated or focused. Inappropriate targets meant that pupils' progress and achievements were very difficult to evaluate. Parents were not close partners in setting targets. Staff did not have sufficient access to specialist training to support them in meeting the needs of pupils with communication difficulties or with autistic spectrum disorder. Transition arrangements for pupils transferring from the nursery did not involve all relevant professionals and parents. The school had worked well to include some pupils in mainstream settings. However, the special educational needs of some pupils, including their health needs, had not always been given full consideration in making decisions about appropriate inclusion. The overall quality of meeting needs was unsatisfactory.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation and facilities was very good. The modern building which shared its campus with medical services and an information service was spacious and bright. Each large classroom had well-equipped en suite toilet facilities. The dining and gym halls provided suitable areas for whole-school activities. Throughout the school very good hoisting arrangements ensured access to all facilities for all pupils. The jacuzzi pool, the soft play and sensory rooms provided pupils with very good specialist facilities. The cleanliness and maintenance of the building was of a very high standard. The school had good security arrangements and was reviewing safe access to the school in the morning. Good account was taken of fire safety. Parents and staff had worked very hard to raise considerable funds with the intention of improving the outside area by developing a sensory garden.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The quality of climate and relationships was good and improving. Staff appreciated the open approach of the acting senior managers who they believed valued their work. Relationships between staff and pupils were of a very high standard. Staff treated pupils with dignity and had been successful in creating a calm and caring atmosphere. Class team meetings were being used to further promote good working partnerships. Staff effectively used praise to motivate pupils whose achievements were shared with parents and celebrated at weekly assemblies. The school had good links with the local church. Pupils were learning about the needs and cultural differences of others through 'helping others' days. Staff were effective in promoting pupils' social skills but now needed to provide more consistent approaches to managing challenging behaviour, arising from pupils' particular needs. Expectations for pupils' learning were not always sufficiently high.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnership with parents and the community were good. Parents learned about aspects of the school and about their children's progress through weekly achievement sheets, daily home-school diaries and a monthly newsletter. Parents' evenings were well attended and the school invited parents to participate in class activities at specified times. Some teachers had supported parents in using symbols to improve communication with their children. Parents had attended a presentation of pupils' enterprise activities. The PSA worked well for the school. Some pupils had benefited from links with other schools. During last session senior pupils from Inveralmond High School had supported pupils during lessons and on special occasions such as Christmas parties. Local shopkeepers and staff in the library welcomed pupils from the school. The acting headteacher had identified the need to update aspects of the school handbook. However, parents had not been provided with accurate information about the school's curriculum. They were not given sufficient opportunities to plan their children's targets with staff.

## 7. Improving the school

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

Beatlie School provided a high standard of caring for pupils. Staff were highly committed and generally worked well in class teams. They had developed excellent relationships with pupils. However, teachers had not been given direction which took account of national initiatives. Their approach to target-setting and teaching focus did not ensure that pupils had an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. Poorly developed programmes of study did not provide pupils with progression in their learning. Lack of collaborative working with therapists and insufficient specialist knowledge limited the development of pupils' communication and language and functional movement. There had been no culture in the school of senior managers monitoring teachers' plans or evaluating classroom practice, or ensuring that targets within IEPs were appropriate and sufficiently linked to the curriculum. There had been some use of quality indicators to evaluate provision but this had not been rigorous. The school's generally positive Standards and Quality report was not a true reflection of the quality of provision.

The acting headteacher and the acting depute headteacher had been in post only three weeks. During that time they were successfully improving communication with staff. They had broadly identified the need to make improvements to aspects of the curriculum and to work with teachers to improve approaches to planning. The acting senior management team had already addressed some health and safety issues, including child protection. They were committed to improving the quality of collaboration among staff and therapists and to improving the management of the Records of Needs.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- the provision of relevant teaching programmes at all stages to provide pupils with an appropriate breadth and balance of experience and better progression within the curriculum;
- approaches to planning and assessment by teachers to enable more accurate monitoring of pupils' progress;
- staff's understanding of the links between IEPs, pupils' targets and the curriculum and the improved management of Records of Needs to ensure that pupils' curricular and individual needs are met;
- pupils' achievements in communication and language through more consistent use of symbols and other forms of alternative communication;
- collaborative working between all therapists and all staff, and opportunities for joint training;
- increasing the length of the school week so that it is in line with mainstream schools; and
- approaches to quality assurance throughout the school to ensure that staff, senior managers and the authority are clear about the quality of the educational experience of 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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, 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.

Lorna Walker  
HM Inspector

6 December 2005

## 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	weak
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	weak
Pupils' attainment in English language	unsatisfactory
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	weak
Pupils' attainment in personal and social education	adequate

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

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Accommodation and facilities	very good
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	very good
Partnership with parents and the community	good

<b>Improving the school</b>	
Self-evaluation	unsatisfactory

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.

<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>• Parents were pleased about the quality of the school building which they felt was kept in good order.</li> <li>• They felt that if they raised a concern they believed the school would do something about it.</li> <li>• Parents found parents' evenings helpful and informative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents would appreciate a clearer idea of the school's priorities for improving the education provided for their children.</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>• Pupils liked being told when they had done something well.</li> <li>• Pupils enjoyed being at school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</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 felt that pupils' achievements were regularly celebrated.</li> <li>• Almost all staff liked working in the school.</li> <li>• They believed there was mutual respect between staff and pupils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff did not believe they had sufficient opportunities to be involved in the decision-making of the school.</li> <li>• They felt that communication amongst staff had not been sufficiently effective.</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 and Cultural Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600200. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **If you wish to comment about inspections of provision for pupils with additional support needs**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of provision for pupils with additional supports needs, 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)

Crown Copyright 2005

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.