



**Bernera Primary School
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
25 August 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents² and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

² Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school

Benera Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the islands of Great Bernera and the Lewis district of Tir Mòr. The roll was 21 including five in the Gaelic medium unit when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

Evaluations in this report apply equally to the Gaelic medium and English classes.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Courteous, well-behaved children who show respect for each other and for their teachers.
- The contribution of all staff to providing a positive and nurturing environment in which children learn.
- Use of information and communications technology to enhance children's learning.
- The effective support provided by parents through The Bernera School Partnership.
- Links with the wider community fostered through children's enterprise projects and wider achievements.

3. Example of good practice

- The use of the online resource GLOW to enhance learning and teaching.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children at all stages are motivated and engage well in learning activities. They work well independently and are developing the skills needed to work together in groups. Children have begun to plan their own learning and to share these plans with parents. They are learning

to reflect on their successes and set new learning targets with the help of their teachers. Staff should build on this practice by giving children clearer guidance on how they can improve their work. Children need to be more active in their learning and at the early stages have more opportunities to learn through play.

The school is providing good opportunities for children to succeed in a wide variety of sporting, arts and cultural activities such as football, music and dance. Children are proud of their achievements, particularly their success in choral singing and storytelling in the local Mod. They develop their confidence by performing in concerts and taking part in a wide range of community events. The school has achieved a gold award for enterprise. This recognises the children's successful work in producing a local telephone directory and a guide for visitors to the island of Great Bernera. The school has a gold award as a health promoting school and all children understand the importance of staying fit and healthy. The school is successful at finding ways to use technology to motivate children. From the early stages, children are skilled at using information and communications technology (ICT) in their learning. They benefit from linking with other schools as part of the online GLOW community. They are proud of their achievements in respect of this national initiative. Older children can use computers effectively for independent research.

In both the English and Gaelic medium classes, almost all achieve appropriate national levels in language and mathematics. A few achieve these levels early but do not always sustain this level of progress as they move through the school. Overall, most children are making good progress in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. All children listen carefully to their teachers and to each other and most speak confidently to adults. Younger children are making a steady start with reading and writing and are beginning to write simple stories independently. In both classes, children read well and understand what they read. In the English class, they are not skilled at discussing books and authors in appropriate depth. Across the stages and classes, children write for a variety of purposes and are acquiring the skills needed to become successful writers. Older

children now need more frequent opportunities to write at length. In the Gaelic medium class, the older children can apply accurately, spelling rules and grammatical points. In mathematics, most can identify the properties of shapes and can measure length, weight and time appropriate to their stage. Almost all children work accurately with numbers in their written work. They need to develop their skills in mental calculation and in applying strategies when solving mathematical problems.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The school provides children with a broad and balanced curriculum. Children receive almost two hours of good quality physical education each week. Staff need to ensure children's skills are developed more systematically in personal and social development, religious and moral education and citizenship. Children in the Gaelic medium classes do not learn in Gaelic across a wide enough range of subjects. The school has clear plans to implement changes in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children have good opportunities to read and write across the curriculum. Teachers now need to find ways for children to apply their numeracy skills in more meaningful contexts. Homework supports children's work in class but lacks variety. Visiting teachers help to develop children's skills in music, art and physical education. Groups of children also benefit from instruction in guitar and chanter and through visits to the school by travelling workshops.

Teachers and support staff know the children well. They vary activities to suit the needs of most learners and provide appropriate help to those who are having difficulty. For a few higher-achieving children the rate at which they learn is too slow. To make appropriate progress, they need more demanding work particularly in reading and writing as they move through the school. Teachers are beginning to share the purpose of lessons with children, but this is not yet consistent practice in both classes. A visiting support for learning teacher provides good support for a few children who require help with their work. Along with staff and parents, she has developed individual plans to help these children achieve more. These plans set out clear

and achievable targets to improve children's learning. Support staff provide valuable and effective support for children's learning.

5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Parents receive regular information about the life and work of the school and share in their children's learning through personal learning planning. Members of The Bernera School Partnership are particularly supportive of the school. They provide very valuable help for all aspects of school life. They assist at curriculum evenings and community events and undertake a wide range of successful fundraising activities. The school has developed an effective range of partnerships to support children's learning. When children need additional support, staff work with different agencies to provide extra help. The school has established very strong links with Bernera Community Association and other organisations to strengthen and widen children's learning. Children perform for a local group of older people and work closely with local businesses in a range of activities including enterprise projects. Staff prepare P7 children well for the transfer to The Nicolson Institute. Children entering P1 have good opportunities to visit the school and meet their teacher.

6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff work well together as a team. They take on a variety of roles to develop and improve the school which leads to better experiences for learners. Teachers work alongside each other in classrooms to share effective practice. Together with parents, they evaluate the quality of education they provide and identify suitable areas for improvement. Support staff provide very valuable help for a range of school activities such as concerts. They willingly take on additional training to develop their own practice which improves the service they provide to children. Children are learning to be responsible by carrying out a range of

duties such as playground buddies. The pupil council is beginning to influence decisions which affect their school. An active eco committee works successfully with parents on a range of initiatives, for example developing the school garden. Staff conscientiously follow the local authority's procedures for dealing with complaints.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

The school provides a welcoming and nurturing environment for children. There are regular opportunities for religious observance. Staff and children are very proud of their school and of their achievements. Staff know the children well and take suitable steps to protect them and keep them safe. They have had appropriate training in child protection. Children are confident that adults will provide help if they need it. From the early stages, children show great respect and concern for each other and their teachers. Overall, the school should promote wider issues of equality and diversity more clearly. Staff have high expectations of children's manners and behaviour. Teachers make good use of praise to encourage children to do their best in lessons. Their expectations of a few higher-achieving children are not high enough.

8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The school is currently reviewing its vision, values and aims along with parents and children. The headteacher provides positive leadership and is very dedicated to the school and its wider community. She has worked closely with staff to bring about improvements to learning and teaching. Along with staff, parents and children she has identified priorities for improvement and has produced a clear plan to guide these developments. All staff are very supportive and committed to enhancing further, children's learning experiences. Overall, the school has the capacity to develop the aspects of provision as outlined in this report.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits following this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Enable children to be more active in their learning and increase the pace of learning particularly for higher-achieving children.
- Ensure more systematic development of children's skills in the areas of the curriculum highlighted in this report.
- Develop children's mathematical skills in mental calculations and problem solving.
- Ensure that a wider range of subjects is taught in Gaelic in the Gaelic medium class.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Bernera Primary School.

Improvements in performance	good
Learners' experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Elaine Merrilees
25 August 2009

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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