

**Bo'ness Public School  
Falkirk Council  
5 September 2006**

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## 1. Background

Bo'ness Public School was inspected in May 2006 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 part of the town of Bo'ness. At the time of the inspection the roll was 271, including 60 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with 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.

- Many aspects of the school's ethos and care for pupils.
- Very effective arrangements to ensure a smooth transition from nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school.
- The productive partnerships with parents, the School Board, agencies and the wider community.
- Very good opportunities which some pupils had to influence aspects of school life through the pupil council and the Eco committee.
- The teamwork of all staff in improving important areas of the school's work.

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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 and carers were positive about many aspects of the school's work. They felt that their children enjoyed being at school and thought that the school had a good reputation in the local community. They had confidence in the staff and in the headteacher's leadership. A minority felt that they did not have a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving pupils' education. Those parents interviewed commented on how much the school had improved in the last two years. Pupils also had positive views about most aspects of the school. They thought that teachers explained things clearly, helped them when they experienced difficulties and told them when they had done something well. However, around a quarter of pupils had concerns about the behaviour of other pupils. Staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school and enjoyed working there. They felt that they had good opportunities to be involved in decision making and that there was effective communication amongst staff.

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

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

The school's curriculum was broad and balanced. The time allocated to English language and mathematics had been increased to improve pupils' skills in these areas. Pupils in P6 were learning German and those in P7 were learning French from specialist subject teachers from the local secondary school. Pupils' learning experiences in physical education, music and craft work were enhanced by visiting specialists. Commendably, all pupils received two hours of high quality physical education each week. There was a strong emphasis on health promotion and pupils were encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils had some opportunities to develop skills in information and communications technology (ICT) through a planned programme of skills development. However, there was a need for further development in its use across the curriculum. At several stages technology was not well developed. A few lessons were very good but overall teaching was adequate. In the most effective lessons, teachers were well organised, gave clear explanations and made good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding. In those classes, teachers shared learning intentions with pupils, set clear timescales for completion of tasks and provided a range of opportunities for pupils to work together and learn from each other. These approaches were not sufficiently consistent across the school. At times, the pace of lessons was too slow and did not result in sufficient challenge for pupils. In a few classes, pupils repeated exercises when it was clear they had mastered the skills and concepts. Not all teachers made effective use of assessment information to identify pupil's needs or plan their next steps in learning. In many classes, pupils did too many worksheets and textbook exercises. Teachers did not always ensure there were well-planned activities for pupils who finished their classwork quickly.

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. Pupils were enthusiastic, eager to work hard and please their teachers. Almost all were well behaved in class. In several classes pupils collaborated well when working in pairs or small groups. In music, physical education and other lessons based on practical activity, pupils worked well individually and with others to produce good quality results. Across the school, pupils were developing skills in listening to, and evaluating, each others' opinions. Pupils from P1 to P3 had useful opportunities to learn through play but there was scope to develop this further. The school garden and grounds had been improved to provide a stimulating environment for learning and play. At all stages, pupils' understanding of citizenship was developing well. Some pupils, particularly at the upper stages were able to reflect on their progress but others were unclear about what they needed to do to improve. Pupils had too few opportunities to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning.

Staff provided pupils with a wide range of opportunities to achieve and develop responsible attitudes. At all stages, pupils demonstrated a good understanding of issues related to healthy lifestyles though some were unsure of basic nutrition requirements and food groups. The eco committee had already had a positive impact by working with parents to introduce a healthy tuck shop. Pupils were enthusiastic about their work to improve the school environment which had resulted in them gaining a bronze eco award. Many pupils had been involved in designing a new garden area using local funding which they had sourced. They were working with the local planning department to ensure compliance with building regulations. Pupils benefited from taking part in a wide range of sporting activities which had been organised by the Active Schools Co-ordinator. They were encouraged to show care and concern for others through fundraising activities and had collected clothes and toiletries to make up "backpacks" for children in Malawi. A group of senior pupils had visited The Scottish Parliament as guests of the Refugee Council and had made a presentation to MSPs as part of the Make Poverty History campaign. At P7, pupils had developed their personal and social skills well through their participation in a residential outdoor week.

### **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Over the last three years levels of attainment in reading and writing had gradually improved. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Most pupils, including those who required additional support with their learning were making good progress. A significant number of pupils, at the early stages, had attained these levels in reading and writing earlier than might normally be expected. However, this good progress was not always sustained as pupils progressed through the school. Most pupils listened attentively and responded well to teachers' questions and instructions. Almost all pupils could talk knowledgeably about their reading texts. They participated enthusiastically in small group discussions and expressed their ideas and opinions clearly. Many could structure and prepare a short presentation but a minority of pupils lacked confidence in presenting to their peers. However, the school did not have a systematic approach to assessing pupils' listening and talking skills. Pupils read well from a variety of texts including non-fiction books but their skills in reading for information were not well developed. At P1, pupils were making very good progress in writing. From P2 to P7, pupils were making good

progress. Many wrote at length and for a range of purposes. However at a few stages pupils needed to write more regularly. The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work was of a high standard.

## **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Over the last three years attainment had gradually improved. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels and a few were achieving these earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils who found aspects of mathematics difficult were being well supported to achieve their individual targets. Pupils at P1 had made a very good start to the development of their mathematical skills. At all stages, pupils could organise, present and interpret information using a range of tables and graphs. For example, those in the upper stages had made good use of spreadsheets and databases to organise and present information appropriately. Most pupils carried out written calculations accurately but their skills in mental calculation were not as well developed. Most pupils were developing skills in handling money and telling the time. Across the school, almost all pupils had a good knowledge of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. By P7, pupils were confident in drawing and measuring angles and using them for bearings. At all stages, pupils achieved some success in solving mathematical problems but were not always able to choose appropriate problem-solving strategies.

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

The pastoral care of pupils was good. All staff knew pupils very well and provided a high standard of care and welfare. They implemented child protection guidelines well. Almost all pupils felt safe in the school and were confident they could discuss sensitive issues with staff. A few pupils had concerns about bullying. The school should continue to develop ways for pupils to express their concerns. The introduction of initiatives such as the breakfast club, the healthy tuck shop and free fruit for P1 and P2 successfully encouraged pupils to make healthy choices. The "Hungry for Success" initiative had resulted in an increase in school meals uptake and pupils could choose from a wide range of nutritious foods. Pupils were encouraged to try new foods in the dining hall and incentives such as "Dinner Lady Awards" were proving successful in promoting healthy food choices. Pupils were encouraged to drink water regularly during the school day and many did so. Pupils' personal and social education addressed issues of healthy and safe living including personal safety, relationships and substance abuse. Staff had developed very effective arrangements to support the transition of pupils between nursery and P1 and for P7 pupils moving to secondary education.

Arrangements to support pupils' learning were good overall. Pupils performed well in tasks set by their teachers, but for a minority of pupils the work was not always well matched to their learning needs. The recently-appointed support for learning teacher provided well-targeted support for pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning. However, some pupils experiencing difficulties in their learning were not always well supported by their class teachers. The support for learning teacher had developed and evaluated individualised educational programmes (IEPs), with clear and appropriate learning targets. The school needed to ensure that she has the opportunity to monitor IEPs in closer consultation with classroom teachers. Support assistants provided a very good level of assistance for pupils. The needs of children looked after and accommodated by the

local authority were being well met. The school constantly sought and developed very good links with a wide range of agencies to support pupils with additional support needs. For example, the school was developing links to support new pupils with English as an additional language.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The accommodation was good and well maintained. Classrooms and open areas were bright and provided a stimulating environment for learning. Teachers displayed pupils' work attractively. There were ample additional areas for learning and teaching including an ICT room, a library, a pupil support base and an open area for play activities. The school had only one main hall which was used for assemblies, physical education, the breakfast club and school lunches. This presented timetabling challenges for staff and, at the time of the inspection, only a few classes were able to use the hall for drama. The education authority was addressing the need to upgrade toilet provision. The playground and garden areas were being further developed to provide better facilities for pupils' learning and social and physical play. Security arrangements were appropriate. The building was not fully accessible to disabled users.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school provided a very welcoming, supportive atmosphere. Staff and pupils had good working relationships and morale was high. Pupils worked and played well together and the behaviour of almost all pupils in class was very good. Pupils' achievements were displayed around the school. They had good opportunities to influence the life of the school through the pupil council. Staff had successfully introduced a wide range of approaches to promote positive behaviour and pupils were generally well behaved and attentive. However, staff's expectations of attainment were sometimes too low and some pupils were capable of achieving higher standards. Regular assemblies provided good opportunities for religious observance and celebrating pupils' successes. Aspects of equality and fairness were promoted well through the school's personal and social education programme. The school actively promoted cultural and religious diversity through projects, class topics and visitors to the school.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had developed productive links with parents and the local community. Parents were kept well informed of school events through regular and informative newsletters. The School Board and PTA provided a high level of support to the school. Teachers produced an informative annual written progress report for each pupil and provided parents with two formal opportunities each year to discuss their child's progress and next steps in learning. Parents praised the approachability of staff. They were consulted on any sensitive issues within the school's health education programme. The school had well-developed links with local schools and pre-school centres.

## 7. Improving the school

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

Overall, the school provided a good standard of education for its pupils. Pupils' attainment was good and improving. The school was continuing to review and improve programmes of study across the curriculum to ensure greater continuity in pupils' learning. The standard of teaching was adequate. Teachers did not use a wide enough range of strategies and approaches and did not match tasks and activities sufficiently closely to pupils' needs and abilities. Teachers needed to make more effective use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. Pupils needed more opportunities to be responsible for their own learning.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. She was highly committed to the school and had established a strong sense of teamwork among all staff. In her two years in post she had prioritised tasks and ensured that the school's ethos, pastoral care and links with parents had improved. She had worked with staff to implement successfully a programme to promote positive behaviour and the school was calm and orderly. She had provided staff with advice and support in taking forward developments in the curriculum and had arranged an impressive programme of staff development to support this. She understood clearly the school's strengths and development needs. The deputy headteacher had responsibility for aspects of early years stages and provided good support to the headteacher. The principal teacher had successfully guided the impressive range of activities which the pupil council and eco committee had been involved in and her teaching was a model of good practice. The school had developed a range of approaches to monitoring and evaluating its work. This included sampling pupils' work, monitoring teachers' written plans, visits to classes and tracking pupils' progress. The headteacher and deputy provided good written feedback to teachers. The management team was aware of the need to focus monitoring more closely on the quality of teaching and pupils' experiences and target support measures in classes where improvement is required. The positive ethos, strong teamwork and high level of commitment of all staff meant that the school, with support

from the education authority, was well placed to take forward the improvements required.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to improve further the overall quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to improve curriculum programmes and develop information and communications technology across the curriculum;
- make better use of assessment information to ensure tasks and activities are better matched to pupils' needs and abilities and provide sufficient challenge;
- improve the provision for pupils with additional support needs in some classes; and
- focus monitoring more closely on the quality of teaching and pupils' experiences and ensure support is targeted where improvement is required.

### **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.

May Geddes  
HM Inspector  
5 September 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	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

<b>How well are pupils supported?</b>	
Pastoral care	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	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
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	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.

<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>• The school was well led and had a good reputation in the community.</li> <li>• Their children enjoyed being at school and found work stimulating and challenging.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children and treated them fairly.</li> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome and organised parents' evenings which were helpful and informative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deal better with inappropriate behaviour.</li> <li>• Explain more clearly the priorities for improving the education of pupils.</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 explained things clearly, checked their homework and helped them if they had difficulties with classwork.</li> <li>• The school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy.</li> <li>• They enjoyed being at school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the behaviour of a small number of pupils in the school.</li> <li>• Deal more effectively with bullying.</li> <li>• Improve the school toilets.</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>• Teachers and support staff recorded a high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few members of the support staff did not feel that they had opportunities 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).

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

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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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