

**Bowhouse Primary School  
Grangemouth  
Falkirk Council  
17 April 2007**

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## 1. Background

Bowhouse Primary School was inspected in November and December 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 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 School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) a group of parents<sup>1</sup> and members of the community.

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 an area of Grangemouth. At the time of the inspection the roll was 383, including 31 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

The nursery class was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The productive and positive school ethos and the warm and welcoming atmosphere.
- Caring staff and high standard of pastoral care, and the relationships between staff and between staff and pupils.
- The arrangements to support pupils transferring from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Grangemouth High School.

## 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.

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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.

Parents were positive about most aspects of school life. They felt welcome in the school and noted the good reputation the school had in the community. They appreciated the regular school newsletters and opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. All pupils interviewed spoke about school with great enthusiasm and pride. They particularly enjoyed working to achieve house points. Older pupils were enthusiastic about their role as playground buddies. They were unhappy with the behaviour of a few pupils. Staff were very positive about the school and enjoyed working in it. They particularly highlighted the strong teamwork amongst staff. They appreciated the support and approachability of the headteacher and deputy headteachers.

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

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

The curriculum provided pupils with an adequate range of learning experiences. Across the school, timetabling was too rigid and did not encourage relevant cross-curricular activities. There was a strong and effective focus on developing skills, knowledge and understanding in science and religious and moral education (RME). Enterprise activities were well established at P3 and P7 and beginning to feature across other stages. Staff provided good opportunities for learning French in P6 and P7. The school was committed to developing sustainability and senior pupils were working towards a recognised award. The development of pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) was not yet consistently good. The headteacher had identified the need to review relevance and progression within aspects of social subjects and technology. There was inconsistent use of the strong local authority programme for health education. The programme in physical education (PE) lacked appropriate breadth. The quality of teaching was good overall. There were a number of examples of high quality teaching. Most teachers were well organised. They gave clear explanations and made effective use of questioning to check and reinforce pupils' understanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers explained what was to be taught, discussed what pupils were expected to learn and involved pupils in discussing learning targets. Overall, however, practice was too variable. The use of praise was not consistent across the school and too many lessons did not encourage pupils to participate actively. Teachers provided pupils with a varied range of well-planned homework activities.

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences was adequate. Most pupils responded positively to what they were asked to do. Almost all were well behaved in class. In most classes, they listened attentively and produced work of a good quality. In a few lessons, pupils worked very well together in pairs and small groups. In P1 and P5 pupils cooperated well with each other when planning their writing. Pupils in P6 worked effectively in pairs to design and produce instruction booklets. Pupils at P5 to P7 regularly accessed the Internet well to investigate topics for science and RME. Overall, however, pupils were not sufficiently active in their learning. Too many tasks involved listening passively to teachers for long periods. In a few lessons, the pace of learning was too slow and tasks were not sufficiently stimulating or challenging.

Across the school, most pupils demonstrated self-confidence and positive attitudes towards others. The school took positive steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Pupils were actively involved in the life of the school and contributed to the decision-making process through membership of the pupil council and eco committee. All pupils participated in the school house system and this had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour across the school. Pupils responded well to opportunities to attain house points for sampling healthy snacks at lunchtime. Older pupils willingly took on additional responsibilities, including acting as playground buddies and assisting younger pupils with any concerns. Pupils developed an awareness of the needs of others by regularly raising funds for a wide range of charities. The school was working towards an eco award and pupils engaged in a wide range of sustainable practices including monitoring energy efficiency and recycling paper and food materials. Pupils produced good quality art work which was well displayed around the school.

### **English language**

The quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. In recent years, levels of attainment had improved, particularly in writing. Most pupils had achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing. A few had achieved these levels at an earlier stage than might normally be expected. Almost all were making good progress in their classwork, including those who experienced difficulties with aspects of their reading and writing. Across the school, pupils' skills in listening and talking were not consistently well developed. By P7, most pupils read with fluency and understanding. However, pupils were not able to discuss a range of books or authors, and their knowledge about the writer's craft was too limited. Across the school, a minority of pupils were skilled in writing letters, reports and imaginative stories. Overall, however, the quality of pupils' written work was too variable. Pupils did not always write at sufficient length. They were not always clear what was expected of them in the quality of their work and spelling was not consistently good. Pupils' skills in punctuation and grammar were good. Pupils' presentation of work throughout the school was of a high standard.

### **Mathematics**

In mathematics, the overall quality of attainment was good. In recent years, levels of attainment had improved steadily. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Most were making good progress in their classwork. Those who required further assistance were making appropriate progress in their learning. Pupils could interpret information from a range of graphs and charts. Their skills in using spreadsheets and databases were under-developed. Almost all pupils were confident in mental and written calculation. In P7, pupils were competent in using fractions and percentages. They were confident and accurate when using money, and in measurement. Across the school, pupils had a sound understanding of the properties of shape, appropriate to their stage. Pupils were able to apply ICT skills across only a limited range of mathematical activities. Most could identify a number of problem-solving strategies but were not sufficiently confident in applying them in group situations. At P1 and P2, pupils were making very good progress in using mathematical knowledge in their broader learning. Pupils at P3 to P7 required further opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to activities across the curriculum.

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

The quality of how pupils' learning needs were met was good. Most teachers ensured that tasks in mathematics and reading were well matched to the needs of individual pupils. However, in other curriculum areas, the level of challenge for more able pupils was too limited. How teachers assessed pupils' progress required more careful monitoring and support. In most classes, pupils contributed to setting their own targets for behaviour and presentation of work. However, agreed targets did not always focus on what was to be learned. Staff provided effective support for pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning or behaviour. They supported individual pupils effectively through well-established mentoring activities. They used a range of appropriate strategies to identify pupils' learning needs. This included effective liaison with relevant support agencies. With support from the integrated learning community (ILC), the school provided good opportunities for groups of pupils to develop a range of social skills. This included a nurture group and activities for boys. Appropriate individualised educational programmes were regularly shared with pupils and parents. The support for learning teacher had developed very positive relationships with individual pupils and had a good overview of the needs of the pupils with whom she worked. Pupils receiving additional support were making good progress towards meeting their individual learning and behaviour targets.

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

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The school provided a very high quality of pastoral care. Staff knew pupils and families very well and were sensitive to pupils' physical, social and emotional needs. Appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure pupils' care and welfare. All staff had a good understanding of child protection procedures. Pupils knew what to do if they had any concerns. The school was making good progress towards achieving the local authority health promoting schools' award. Staff effectively promoted healthy lifestyles through a range of strategies. This included a strong focus on healthy eating, and regular use of Grangemouth stadium for sports activities. The school had well-established and effective arrangements in place to support pupils transferring from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Grangemouth High School.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. Security arrangements were appropriate. In most cases, the classroom environment was attractive. The quality of display of pupils' art and writing around the school was of a consistently high standard. Staff made regular and effective use of available space, including an extra classroom which served as a library and ICT suite. The large gymnasium was used daily for PE and drama, but also served as the dining area. A new extension offered appropriate space for the nursery and a music room. School lunch provision had been improved since the recent installation of a kitchen and the uptake of school lunches had increased. The playground offered a large area for energetic play. Disabled access was limited to the ground floor.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school had a very friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils were proud of their school and almost all wore school uniform. Almost all pupils were polite and well behaved. Weekly assemblies provided appropriate opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating pupils' achievements. The morale of pupils and staff was high and relationships among them were very good. Staff had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and wider achievements. Their expectations of attainment were not accurate for all pupils. Learning about fairness and equality was a feature of personal and social development activities. With local authority support, the school had begun to review the curriculum to highlight ways in which staff could increase pupils' understanding of racial equality and discrimination.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Partnerships with parents, the School Board, PTA, the local community, and the ILC were good. The school communicated effectively with parents through an informative website and regular newsletters. Teachers provided regular, helpful information on their children's progress and about the curriculum. This included information about drug, alcohol and sex and relationships education. The school was well supported by the School Board which had been active in improving lunch arrangements in their campaign to have the kitchen installed. Parents were regularly involved in successful fundraising and social events. The school had developed strong partnerships with other local schools in the ILC, a range of support agencies and local businesses. Staff made good use of the local environment to help them develop children's learning.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

Staff in Bowhouse Primary School provided pupils with a good standard of education within a positive and caring learning environment. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was good. The overall quality of teaching was good. The quality of pastoral care was very good. Staff were sensitive to the needs of pupils. Relationships across the school were very good. Most pupils were making good progress in their learning with their needs being largely met in English language and mathematics. However, the level of pace and challenge in other areas of the curriculum did not always ensure that the needs of all pupils were fully met.

The recently appointed headteacher had begun to develop positive relationships with pupils, staff and parents. Her reflective and measured approach had quickly gained the respect and trust of staff. She had quickly established effective communication with staff and pupils. The headteacher had a clear vision for improving the school and had ensured all staff were engaged in development work. She had accurately identified that staff required a more flexible approach to how they organised pupils' experiences. The two deputy headteachers and principal teacher provided good support to the headteacher and staff. As planned, the remits and responsibilities of the senior management team required revision to help improve leadership across all stages of the school. Senior managers had developed a range of appropriate approaches to monitor learning and teaching and evaluate the work of the school. This included the monitoring of forward plans. Written feedback to teachers arising from classroom observations was too limited in nature and provided insufficient advice on how to improve practice. The headteacher had recently started to implement a programme of revised classroom observations. Prior to the appointment of the new headteacher, a

lack of supply teachers had limited the schools' capacity to monitor learning and teaching. Staff had recently been involved in evaluating their own practice using quality indicators developed nationally. Overall, there was insufficient rigour in approaches to self-evaluation and a need for an increased focus on ensuring impact on pupils' learning and progress. With appropriate support from the education authority, the school had the capacity to ensure ongoing improvement.

### **Main points for action**

The school and the education authority should take account of the need to improve:

- aspects of the curriculum in order to raise further pupils' attainment;
- the choice of activities and level of challenge to ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are met;
- approaches to assessment to meet the needs of individual pupils; and
- whole-school approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision.

### **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.

Susan R Duff  
HM Inspector

17 April 2007

## 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	adequate
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

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

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

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Leadership across the school	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

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
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>• They were made to feel welcome in the school.</li> <li>• Children enjoyed being at school.</li> <li>• The school buildings were kept in good order.</li> <li>• The school had a good reputation in the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the school’s priorities for improving the education of pupils.</li> <li>• Make clear the standard of work it expects from pupils.</li> <li>• Provide more information about their child’s strengths and weaknesses.</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>• Teachers explained things clearly.</li> <li>• Teachers expected them to work hard.</li> <li>• Teachers told them when they were doing well and checked their homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the behaviour of a few pupils.</li> <li>• A few pupils thought that staff should treat all pupils fairly and listen more to what pupils said.</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>• Staff were happy with almost all aspects of school life and enjoyed working in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few staff felt discipline could be dealt with more effectively.</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).

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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 the HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure leaflet 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 (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@spsos.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsos.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spsos.org.uk](http://www.spsos.org.uk).

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