

# **St Bride's Primary School Bothwell South Lanarkshire Council**

**24 October 2006**

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## **1. Background**

St Bride's Primary School was inspected in June 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>.

St Bride's is a denominational school which serves the village of Bothwell. It forms part of the Holy Cross Learning Community. At the time of the inspection the roll was 294, including 78 in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well 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. The previous school building was destroyed by fire in July 2003. Following a period when the school was accommodated in another school, the present building opened in January 2005.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Polite, well-behaved and highly-motivated pupils who achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pastoral care and the school's promotion of equality and fairness.
- Accommodation and facilities, and their impact on the morale of pupils and staff.
- Productive relationships within the school and with parents and the wider community.
- High quality leadership provided by the headteacher and the effective support provided by the depute headteachers.
- Teamwork among staff and their commitment to improving the work of the 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](#).

Parents were very satisfied with the school. All thought the school had a good reputation and was well led. They were very pleased with the new building. Those interviewed, including the chairperson of the School Board, were similarly positive about the welcoming atmosphere in the school and said that they found parents' evenings informative and helpful. A number would have liked to receive more information about the school's priorities for improvement. Pupils reported that they enjoyed being at school. They too were very impressed with the new building and its facilities. They thought that teachers knew them well as individuals, expected them to work hard and helped keep them safe and healthy. Older pupils valued the opportunities they had to take responsibility for aspects of school life. Staff were very positive. All thought the school was well led and that senior managers formed an effective team which communicated well with staff. Most support staff did not think they received adequate training.

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

### Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum provided pupils with a broad and balanced experience relevant to their interests and capabilities. Staff allocated additional time to English language and mathematics and pupils' performance in these areas was strong. Pupils at all stages benefited from a good range of stimulating learning experiences in enterprise education and health education. The school had established strong links with local businesses. There were numerous examples of effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) throughout the school. The quality of teaching was very good overall and there were instances of excellent practice. Teachers gave clear instructions and explanations and used questioning effectively. They made good use of praise to encourage and motivate pupils. Teachers made clear what they intended pupils to learn

during a lesson and what they would look for as evidence of achievement. They set a good range of homework tasks, including some which required pupils to research topics at home and complete more extended pieces of work.

The quality of pupils' learning was very good. Almost all pupils were highly motivated and keen to learn. They applied themselves very well during lessons and responded positively to working collaboratively on a range of tasks. At P5 and P6, for example, pupils worked well in pairs to look closely at extracts from newspapers, identifying key features and using these as the basis for their own writing in this style. Pupils were beginning to reflect on their learning, what they had achieved and how they might improve. In most lessons, pupils worked at a good pace on appropriate tasks, but there remained room for further improvement in challenging higher-achieving pupils. At P1 and P5, pupils were learning about special days such as holidays and Pentecost as part of their religious education. In P3, pupils were able to identify key points about food sources including plants and meat. Primary 5 pupils studied shoes and their design and construction as part of a technology topic, developing a good awareness of how shoes were made and marketed. At P7, pupils had studied the Second World War and were able to recall key events and discuss aspects of life on the Home Front.

The school placed a strong and effective emphasis on developing and promoting pupils' wider achievements and encouraging healthy living. Pupils benefited from a range of sporting and musical activities, including through links with local clubs. For example, pupils at P6 received tuition in cricket and at P7 a dance professional helped prepare pupils for their end-of-session 'prom'. Older pupils gained confidence and enjoyed taking part in a wide range of activities when on residential visits to London or outdoor centres. Pupils were learning to show respect and tolerance for others and the school actively supported a number of charities at home and abroad. Senior pupils were developing effective skills in citizenship through, for example, visits to the Scottish Parliament and corresponding with elected representatives. Pupils at P7 helped those at P1 by acting as 'buddies' and P6 pupils were paired with nursery children due to enter P1 after the summer. Members of the pupil council had influenced aspects of school life through, for example, introducing 'buddy benches' and playground games.

## **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Although attainment in reading and writing had dipped in 2005 following the disruption caused by the fire it had remained above the national average. The school was now well on its way to restoring levels to those that it had enjoyed in previous years. Almost all pupils were on course to achieve the levels usually associated with their stage in both reading and writing and many had achieved such levels early. The school did not yet systematically collate information on pupils' attainment in listening and talking. However, on the evidence available pupils attained appropriate levels in listening and talking. Pupils who required additional support with aspects of English language were making very good progress. Pupils at P7 were able to discuss a range of issues confidently, listening attentively to points made. At P5, pupils prepared and presented well-considered speeches to their classmates on the topic of school uniform. Almost all pupils read widely for a variety of purposes and could talk about books they had read, their favourite authors and comment on how writers used language. Across the school, pupils wrote for a wide range of purposes. Almost all were able to express their feelings well and could write at appropriate length. There were numerous examples of high-quality pieces of

writing in classes at all stages. Throughout the school, pupils benefited from opportunities to use ICT to develop skills such as editing and presenting text.

## **Mathematics**

In mathematics, the overall quality of attainment was very good. In the past years, pupils' attainment had remained consistently high except for a slight dip last year. Almost all pupils were achieving the appropriate national levels. At some stages, a significant number were achieving these levels early. The school had successfully improved the quality of attainment for those pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of mathematics. Pupils used ICT regularly, and in many classes very effectively, to develop their learning in mathematics. At all stages, pupils were making very effective progress in information handling and used graphs well to organise and display information. Across all stages, pupils were competent in written and mental calculation. Pupils in P2, for example, were able to carry out simple mental calculations quickly and accurately. Across the school, pupils had a very good knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils at all stages had regular experience of problem-solving activities and could describe how to solve problems using different strategies.

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

The school had effective arrangements in place to ensure pupils' care and welfare. Staff knew pupils very well as individuals and responded sensitively to their social, physical and emotional needs. Senior managers communicated significant information about pupils to all relevant staff appropriately and deployed staff to very good effect. The school placed a strong and effective emphasis on health education and encouraged pupils to be active and to eat well. Pupils felt safe in the school and were very confident that staff would take appropriate action to support them if they had a problem. Child protection procedures were clearly set out and communicated with staff.

Teachers provided activities and resources which met the needs of their pupils very well. Classroom assistants and auxiliaries provided good quality and well-judged assistance for pupils. They worked very effectively with class teachers to contribute to high quality learning experiences and to help raise attainment throughout the school. The school was working very successfully to develop an inclusive environment within which the needs of all pupils were met. Senior managers, teachers, support assistants and visiting support services provided very effective support for pupils with additional support needs. The school had developed effective individualised educational programmes (IEPs) with appropriate long- and short-term targets in English language, mathematics and personal and social development. These helped ensure that pupils made appropriate progress. Parents were well involved in reviews to plan for meeting pupils' support needs. The school had effective arrangements in place to support pupils transferring into P1 and from P7 to secondary school. The education authority's P6-S2 liaison teacher made a very useful contribution to ensuring continuity in learning from primary to secondary school.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation was excellent. The school was bright and attractive and provided a very welcoming learning environment. It was very well cared for by the janitor and the cleaning staff. All associated with the school commented on the very positive impact the new building had on morale and pupils' enthusiasm for school. Teachers used display very effectively to stimulate pupils and support their learning. Classrooms were spacious and well-equipped and allowed pupils easy access to outside teaching areas to extend and enhance their learning. Pupils benefited from an air-conditioned, up-to-date computer suite, and computers and interactive white-boards in all classrooms. There was a good-sized gymnasium and a separate dining hall. Pupils enjoyed the opportunities to play actively in the extensive playgrounds which included an all-weather pitch and an adventure 'trim trail'. The school's grounds were fenced and entry was controlled by an electronic system and monitored by cameras. Access and services for those with a physical disability were excellent. The school was continuing to restock the class and central libraries.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The atmosphere and the quality of relationships among pupils and staff were very positive. Staff worked very well together as a team and support staff played a very important part in the life of the school. Pupils showed respect for each other and for adults. Staff expectations of pupils' attainment in key areas of the curriculum were appropriately high. There were appropriate arrangements for religious observance, including a weekly assembly. Teachers used a wide variety of approaches to promote positive behaviour and attitudes. Staff successfully promoted a strong sense of equality and fairness and closely monitored attainment to ensure that boys and girls achieved equally well. Pupils were valued, treated fairly and by P6 and P7 were very aware of the need to combat issues such as discrimination and racism.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The school had established excellent links with the School Board, parents, the church and the wider community. Parent helpers were actively involved in supporting the school at all stages and were highly valued. There were notable strengths in the school's contacts with local businesses and with the neighbouring non-denominational school. The School Board and PTA were active and very supportive of the school. Weekly newsletters were informative, friendly in tone and clear. Parents were encouraged to communicate directly with the headteacher by e-mail. There was a weekly 'surgery' whereby parents could call at the school to discuss any matter with one of the senior managers. Parents received two informative written reports on their children's progress each session. The school consulted on potentially</p>

	sensitive issues and actively sought to involve parents in their children's schooling.
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## 7. Improving the school

[Appendix 1](#) provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school. St Bride's Primary School provided a very good quality of education for its pupils. Staff worked very well together and were committed to securing further improvements. They provided a very caring and supportive learning environment for pupils. The quality of pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was very good. The quality of accommodation was excellent and had a very positive impact on the quality of education provided. Pupils benefited from the school's very positive links with local businesses, parents and the community.

The experienced headteacher provided high quality leadership and direction. She combined highly impressive interpersonal and communication skills with a sound grasp of current developments in primary education and a clear vision for the future. Other promoted staff provided very good support for the headteacher and fulfilled their remits very well. The school had very effective approaches in place to monitor the progress of its work. These were well understood and accepted by staff and were becoming increasingly systematic and rigorous. Staff were actively involved in the process of reviewing the effectiveness of the school, in helping to identify priorities for improvement and participating in working groups on new initiatives. Senior managers had put in place tracking procedures to provide a firm basis for ensuring that all pupils made progress in line with their capabilities. They regularly discussed pupils' attainment with teachers and took appropriate action to ensure that due progress was being made. The school sought the views of parents on a range of matters and used these to help inform its priorities for development. It had published a report on standards and quality.

### Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- ensure that the training needs of support staff are met; and
- improve the approach to assessment in listening and talking at class and whole school levels.

## What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 the education authority working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Nick Pepin  
HM Inspector

24 October 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	very good
The teaching process	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	very good
<b>How well are pupils supported?</b>	
Pastoral care	very good
Meeting pupils' needs	very good
<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Accommodation and facilities	excellent
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	excellent
<b>Improving the school</b>	
Leadership	very good
Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities	very good
Self-evaluation	very 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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children enjoyed school.</li><li>• Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some wanted clearer information on how to help with homework.</li></ul>
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teachers expected them to work hard and helped them when they were had difficulties.</li><li>• Helped keep them safe and healthy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give them the right amount of homework.</li></ul>
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicated effectively between senior managers and staff.</li><li>• Set high standards for pupils' attainment.</li><li>• Maintained good relations with the local community.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some thought there could be greater consistency in setting standards for pupils' behaviour.</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 Executive Director (Education Resources), 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, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>.

### If you wish to comment about primary inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, Acting HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.



## **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 <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: <http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk/>.

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1. 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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