

**Dalmally Primary School
Argyll and Bute Council
11 December 2007**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Dalmally Primary School in December 2006. The report indicated that HM Inspectors would engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress and would publish an interim report within one year of the publication of the original report.

Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report. HM Inspectors carried out an interim follow-through visit to the school in October 2007. The team assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

Education authority officers had provided valuable support to the school since the original inspection. They had worked with the headteacher and staff on a range of activities designed to improve pupils' experiences and the school's capacity to improve. Officers had given significant support in relation to school leadership and management, staff development and provision of equipment and materials. This support had helped staff to provide pupils with a better balanced, more progressive range of learning experiences. Pupils were responding well to improved opportunities to be more actively involved in their learning.

The school continued to give very good attention to pupils' care and welfare. Relationships at all stages remained very good. Staff had developed further the strong partnership with parents and the community by organising two successful dramatic performances. The school had achieved a bronze award for its work in education for sustainability.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in December 2006 identified five main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Ensure improvement in the balance and structure of the curriculum.

The school and education authority had made a good start to addressing this point for action.

The school had introduced new programmes of study in talking and listening, and information and communications technology (ICT). Staff had reviewed the programme for mathematics to ensure that new learning built more effectively on pupils' prior attainment. As a result of weekly visits by the French assistant from Oban High School, the quality of pupils' experiences in French was improving. The headteacher and staff had reviewed class timetables, which now included a better range of experiences for pupils across key areas. A number of areas, for example environmental studies, had still to be reviewed. The school

was beginning to plan more cross-curricular learning in several aspects, including enterprise activity.

3.2 Improve attainment in English language.

There were signs of improvement in pupils' attainment in talking, listening, reading and writing.

The introduction of a clear, progressive programme for talking and listening had enabled staff to improve pupils' skills, particularly in group discussion. The school's plan to work in partnership with the mobile library service to develop pupils' skills in reading for information were still in the early stages. Pupils' overall enthusiasm for reading, however, had increased. An increased focus on writing had enabled pupils to develop their skills in this aspect. Those at P3 to P5 were now producing a wide range of high quality writing. At all stages, pupils had written sensitive descriptive poetry during the school's poetry week. The presentation of pupils' work had improved, particularly at P6/P7. Staff had introduced a new spelling programme, but it was too early to see its impact on the standard of pupils' work. Very recent involvement in staff development on reading and writing had the potential to help teachers in continuing their work to raise attainment across the school.

3.3 Improve the quality of learning and teaching to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

The school was working well to address this main point for action.

All teachers had taken part in staff development activities to improve aspects of learning and teaching. They were now using a wider range of approaches to assess pupils' progress in tasks and activities. Pupils were more involved in personal learning planning and in evaluating their own work and the work of others. Teachers' use of strategies from the national *Assessment is for Learning* initiative was involving pupils more actively in their own learning. Pupils demonstrated an improved ability to work together effectively and to develop their learning through productive dialogue. They were beginning to make more regular use of ICT to support aspects of their work in writing and mathematics. The headteacher and staff had reviewed their use of homework to increase the level of challenge in tasks set and provide opportunities to extend pupils' learning. Teachers continued to make effective use of praise to motivate and encourage pupils. The pace of learning, however, remained variable across the school. The headteacher should continue to work with education authority officers to ensure further improvement in the pace and challenge in pupils' learning.

3.4 Improve assistance for pupils with additional support needs and access to the school for disabled people.

The school was working well to address this main point for action. The education authority had made improvements to the school building so that it was now fully accessible for people with mobility difficulties.

Education authority officers had led development in the organisation of the school's approaches to supporting all pupils in their learning. The headteacher had reviewed the

school's existing procedures and practice to support pupils' learning and had agreed a revised policy with staff. Improved record-keeping enabled better targeted support for individual pupils. The school had developed effective relationships with a range of support services, including the educational psychologist and health professionals, to improve learning for a number of pupils. More effective planning for pupils with additional support needs was now in place. However, the plans had been operating for too short a time to see the impact of adjustments to teaching to take better account of pupils' needs. Staff were beginning to implement a variety of strategies to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics. Ongoing staff development was enabling teachers to provide more appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils. The headteacher had made some improvements to his monitoring of the range of learning needs. He should continue to work with staff to ensure that tasks and activities, in all areas of the curriculum, are consistently well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

3.5 Improve leadership for learning and self-evaluation.

With support from the education authority, the headteacher had begun to take steps to address this main point for action. Further work was required to ensure continued improvement.

The headteacher had developed his approaches to record-keeping to improve his overview of the school. He had begun to offer guidance to staff by leading the development of useful policies on support for learning and homework. He had consulted staff, parents and pupils on aspects of the school's development. The headteacher had begun to monitor the quality of the school's work through scrutiny of teachers' plans and observation of learning and teaching. His helpful written feedback to teachers enabled them to reflect on their practice. The headteacher had begun to track pupils' progress through national levels of attainment, but needed to involve staff more fully in this process. There was still scope to improve the rigour of self-evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement in pupils' attainment and in the overall quality of learning and teaching.

4. Conclusion

The headteacher and staff had worked well together in their implementation of the action plan prepared following the initial inspection report of December 2006. They had taken a number of important steps to address aspects of all of the main points for action and more improvements were planned. Further work was required to ensure sustained improvement. Education authority officers had supported the school well and were also closely involved in monitoring progress.

HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority. They will carry out a second follow-through visit to the school within one year of the publication of this interim report. They will report to parents and carers on the progress made.

Anne McGachey
HM Inspector

11 December 2007

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 Community 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, Ground Floor Suite, Unit 7, Blair Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2LA or by telephoning 0141 435 3550. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

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Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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