

Argyll and Bute Council Community Services: Education



Follow Through Report on the Inspection of Strachur Primary School

Inspection: June 2007

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This follow-through report tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action within the inspection report.

First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has improved the ways in which it helps children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes, which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹.

This report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

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

Strachur Primary School is situated in the village of Strachur on the shores of Loch Fyne. The catchment area of the school is wide, taking in Loch Restil on the A83, past Cairndow and Dunderave Castle to the north. To the west it takes in Strathlachlan, and stretches to the south halfway along Loch Eck.

Since the inspection the school has gained from extending effective partnerships with the other schools in the Cowal area. This has involved working together to develop the curriculum in light of the national initiative, Curriculum for Excellence, particularly in the area of transition at P7 – S1.

The school is well maintained with bright, attractive teaching areas and grounds. Since the publication of the HMIE report the school has been upgraded in accordance with Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The development of the curriculum in the light of the national initiative Curriculum for Excellence, in particular active, collaborative and interdisciplinary learning.
- Continued approach to improving pupils' health and well-being.
- The positive impact of a range of partnerships on many aspects of the school's work including links with Malawi and enterprise projects.
- The development of links with pre-school providers.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

All children are making good progress at appropriate levels. They are keen to learn and enjoy their lessons. Children have regular opportunities to work together and share ideas. They work very well together in pairs, groups and house teams.

Pupils continue to be actively involved in their learning. Visits from pre-school children give regular opportunities for pupils at the early level to enjoy shared active learning experiences.

The frequent use of the outdoor environment provides real life contexts for learning that help to develop understanding and skills. Studies of the loch and its creatures involved pupils in developing a deeper understanding of the importance of preventing litter and pollution. Learning is shared between classes.

The latest addition to the school grounds is the Victory Garden consisting of four raised beds and a polytunnel. This allowed all pupils to plant vegetables and was of particular importance to P6/7 who were studying the history of World War 2 and the Home Front.

Staff have worked hard to ensure that children are confident in taking responsibility, leading and evaluating aspects of their learning. The successful implementation of TASC and co-operative learning has been important in this development.

All the children work towards specific targets recorded in their personal learning plans. Plenary sessions provide opportunities for them to discuss and evaluate their work and learning.

The school continues to support pupils' wider achievements and encourages participation in a range of after school clubs and activities. This has included Yogabugs, climbing at Benmore Outdoor Centre and more recently the Activities Club for P3/4/5 and Room 13 for P6/7.

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

Staff continue to work very effectively as a team and with other agencies to fully support children's learning. They continue to ensure that activities planned are carefully matched to the individual needs of all pupils.

Across the school children know what they need to do to improve and continue to set themselves targets as part of their personal learning plan.

Staff have opportunities to share good practice and to work together to evaluate and improve their teaching and pupils' learning experiences. A recent whole school project, Planet Earth was shared at assembly and on an open day for Parents and Carers. Staff and pupils evaluated the project and discussed next steps.

Children's learning continues to be enhanced by the input and support of a variety of sources and individuals within the local community. These include: Scottish National Heritage Trust, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Rangers and Lochgoilhead Fiddlers. Many local specialists, for example, Scottish Beekeepers were involved in the Planet Earth project.

A very good example of effective partnership is the link with the village Community Futures group set up by the National Park. The school has adopted Strachur Bay through the Marine Conservation Trust

(MCT). This involves the pupils in collecting litter and recording the different types gathered once each term. The information is sent to MCT. The Futures group has a committee who are concerned with the Bay and they support the school's work.

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

Children have very good opportunities to influence and improve the work of the school and its environment. The Active Sports Coordinator trained P6/ 7 pupils as playground buddies.

The pupils have acquired their third Green Flag and the Pupil/Eco Council is in the process of putting together the next action plan.

All pupils are provided with opportunities to develop enterprising skills throughout the year. A good example of this work is the development of social enterprise with the establishment of the Room 13 management committee.

The school has a variety of workshops and open afternoons, for Parents/Carers throughout the year. This supports them in developing their understanding of the work of the school and how they can support their child.

6. What has the school achieved in working towards the main points for action?

Active learning has become part of the curriculum throughout the school. This includes daily activities for pupils at the early level in various subject areas.

All teaching staff have been trained in Co-operative Learning and visited other schools to share and identify good practice in the planning and management of active learning.

The school is continuing to develop programmes with pre-school providers by planning activities on a weekly basis, for occasions and joint celebrations.

Strachur Primary is linked with Chitimba School in Malawi raising pupils' awareness and understanding of Global Citizenship. This work is further developed through topics on Fair Trade, multicultural assemblies and supporting anti-racist competitions.

Rigorous evaluation has been developed as an important part of the planning process. Collegiate time is allocated for reflection on projects, such as Planet Earth, progress in active learning, developments towards improvement priorities and comments from parents and carers. Reflection and sharing assessment is for learning strategies takes place through the work of the Teaching and Learning Community, involving regular meetings with the staff of three other local schools. Evaluation is recorded on planners, school audits and personal review sheets.

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

Staff continue to set high expectations for children's attainment and wider achievement. Pupils are provided with regular feedback on their work and next steps are discussed and agreed with teachers. Children's successes and achievements are regularly celebrated.

The school continues to further develop and maintain its strong links and involvement with the local community.

The pupils, working with a local charity, The Raven Trust, support Chitimba School in Malawi by fund raising and sending equipment.

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

Staff continue to provide a quality education for all pupils through a broad and balanced curriculum and are effectively developing aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

The very effective leadership of the head teacher and staff's support and commitment ensure that the work of Strachur Primary has clear vision and direction. Plans for improvement are appropriate and identify a clear set of priorities. Staff meet regularly to discuss their work and how they can continue to develop the work of the school.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the continued strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of the head teacher, the school has demonstrated a strong capacity to continue to improve.

Community Services: Education will continue to monitor the work of the school as part of its procedures for ensuring quality.

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Argyll and Bute Council
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