



## **Community Services: Education**



# **Follow-through Inspection of Strath of Appin Primary School Argyll and Bute**

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**1. The Inspection**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on Standards and Quality in Strath of Appin Primary School in June 2006. Working with the school, the education authority prepared and made public an action plan in November 2006 indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

Arrangements in consultation with HMIE require that a follow-through report is completed within two years of the initial report and, in the case of Strath of Appin Primary School, this is the responsibility of the education authority.

Members of the education authority's Quality Improvement Team visited the school prior to the publication of this report to carry out a follow-through inspection. This visit 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**

Under the leadership of the head teacher, and with the commitment and support of staff, the school had continued to improve in key areas of its work and promote pupils' wider achievements.

All pupils now had brighter and more spacious areas to work in throughout the school. Staff and pupils had benefited from a significant rearrangement of the teaching areas, following an evaluation of the existing teaching approaches and use of space across the school. The pre-school children had been relocated into the main class area, creating opportunities for them to work regularly with pupils from the infant class. In turn, the Gaelic Medium Class had moved to the closed teaching room to ensure that the early years pupils would have uninterrupted periods of Gaelic immersion. More space had been made available in the hall for a range of activities including P.E. and Drama.

All P5-7 pupils worked with members of the local community on a school grounds topic and had identified four particular sections of the grounds for development, which in turn will provide future opportunities for outdoor learning. The school was now part of a community based partnership, fund raising for an all-weather sports facility within the school grounds.

The school had achieved an Eco School bronze award and with support from parents was now working towards the highest level of Green Flag award. The school had been accredited also with the highest level as a Health Promoting School.

In order to develop the pupils' citizenship skills, the English medium class had undertaken a topic on the Scottish Parliament involving a visit to Edinburgh and a range of linked tasks such as, class debates, creating manifestos and submitting a petition to the local councillor regarding the local bus service.

All pupils were given the opportunity to meet and work alongside children from local schools. They had recently participated in a joint orienteering day and a visit from Glasgow's Science Centre staff. The swimming programme had been extended to include whole day's activities and the forthcoming sports day was to be a joint school event, hosted by Lismore Primary School.

Gaelic pupils had participated in a number of cultural events that included the Argyll Gaelic Drama Festival, the local mod and working with a visiting Gaelic theatre group and author. A collaborative project on a travel itinerary with the Gaelic pupils from Sandbank Primary School in Dunoon, had provided the staff and pupils with an opportunity to work together and to communicate using email, telephone, fax and web logs.

Parents had run a weekly, after school sports club for all pupils. An after school drama club had competed in the local drama festival, winning the primary school competition.

### **3. Progress Towards Meeting the Main Points for Action**

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

#### **3.1 Improve overall attainment in Gaelic and in aspects of Mathematics and English language**

The school had made good progress towards meeting this main point for action and there had been improvements in attainment in English Language, mathematics and in Gaelic Language and mathematics.

Reading programmes had been reviewed across the school and new learning resources had been introduced. These resources offered more motivating and challenging activities that enhanced pupils' skills in literacy and promoted and encouraged more reading for enjoyment.

A more interactive teaching approach to mathematics had been adopted and there now was a greater emphasis on the teaching of number facts and mental calculations. Pupils participated in mental mathematics warm up exercises prior to mathematics lessons. A whole-school strategy for the teaching of problem solving had been developed and there was a focus on

using problem solving skills across a range of curricular areas as well as in mathematics.

Interactive whiteboards had been installed in all teaching areas. Teachers' regular use of these boards had provided pupils with better opportunities to be more actively involved in their own learning.

Pupils now had more opportunities to speak Gaelic by participating in a wider range of interesting and motivating activities, which included working with other Gaelic speakers.

### **3.2 Develop more effective teamwork amongst staff in order to build on, and share, best practice in learning and teaching**

The school had made good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The improvements in teamwork had a direct and positive effect on the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and staff planned frequent opportunities for constructive professional discussions related to pupils' learning. They shared ideas and worked together on whole school projects.

Teachers had willingly taken responsibility for important areas of school life, namely Eco School developments and the work of the pupil council. In turn, this had developed effective working partnerships between staff and pupils and highlighted the important contribution that children can make to the work of the school.

### **3.3 Ensure a clear and shared understanding amongst staff about how best to meet pupils' learning needs**

The school had made very good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The improved approach to staff teamwork had ensured that regular and effective discussions took place regarding pupils' learning and progress. All pupils were supported more effectively in their work and provided with more challenging and personalised activities. Teachers shared the learning intentions with pupils at the beginning of each lesson and had introduced procedures for the regular monitoring pupil progress.

Improvements had been made to the provision of homework activities. These activities were more varied and parents were better informed about how best to support their children. To support these changes, all parents had been provided with a leaflet containing a set of parent prompts. Additional parent prompts and guidance had been developed on a range of mathematics-based activities.

The Gaelic teacher had organised a weekly drop-in session for parents focusing on supporting their children in Gaelic learning and homework. This had proved particularly useful for parents of newly registered pupils.

### **3.4 Further develop leadership skills and self-evaluation to ensure a clearer focus on learning**

The school had made satisfactory progress towards meeting this main point for action.

The head teacher had established a number of procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, which were to be developed further in order that improved outcomes for pupils would be ensured. These procedures included regular classroom visits, sampling pupils' work and tracking individual pupil progress.

As part of the process of developing self-evaluation of the work of the school, the head teacher had issued homework surveys to pupils and parents. The pupil council had surveyed all pupils on homework and the results had been passed to teachers for review and discussion at staff meetings. A survey of parents' views on general reading at home had been undertaken also.

A programme of regular staff meetings had been established. These provided good opportunities for discussion on continuing improvements to the work of the school.

## **4. Conclusion**

The school, with the support of the education authority, has made good progress overall in meeting the main points for action contained in the report of June 2006.

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

**Douglas Hendry  
Director of Community Services: Education  
Argyll and Bute Council  
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