



**Applecross Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
29 June 2010**

We published a report on Applecross Primary School and Nursery Class in September 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out a follow-through inspection in May 2009 and published a report on that visit in June 2009.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in May 2010. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school¹ provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping 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 parents². Our 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.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

¹ The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

² 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

Applecross Primary School and Nursery Class serves the village of Applecross and the surrounding very remote rural area. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher relief teacher has been appointed on a temporary basis. There are now no children at P1 and P5.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Improvement in children's attainment in English language and mathematics.
- The use of practical, real life contexts for learning.
- Staff teamwork in developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- The use of active learning and challenging tasks to help children make effective progress in their learning.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Nursery children are eager to investigate and explore the local environment. They recently collected mussels, limpets and crabs on a seashore visit and explored how these creatures live in seawater. As a result, children could answer the most searching questions with confidence. Staff now need to provide more well-planned, purposeful play for children in the nursery and at the early stages. In the primary class, children are now more active in their learning. They now use computers effectively to support their learning across the curriculum. Children research their topics confidently using the Internet. Older children use mathematical games programmes to calculate areas and perimeters.

Staff are developing their literacy and numeracy skills effectively through real life contexts across the curriculum. Younger children put their numeracy skills to very effective use in an enterprising topic about how the local shop runs. Older children produced accurate scale drawings as part of their work researching the position of the ruins of eight old Applecross schools. Children now write for a wider range of purposes, including weather reports, recipe instructions and the effects

of bullying and racism. Staff are now providing tasks and activities which are more interesting and ensure all children are challenged in their learning. As a result, all children are now achieving or exceeding appropriate national levels of attainment.

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

Parents continue to support the school well. Many children benefit from after school clubs run by parents, members of the community and staff. These include art and craft, singing, Bible class, Gaelic and football clubs. Staff keep parents well informed about developing *Curriculum for Excellence* and parents are keen to support this. Upper stages children learned drama and film making skills with the help of a parent. They produced an effective film about living in Applecross village. Members of the local community continue to enhance children's learning. Children recently worked with the local fisheries and learned how to care for and hatch salmon eggs. The local heritage centre helps children to research the history of Applecross.

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

Children are now taking more responsibility for their learning. The pupil council are learning to take responsibility in making a time capsule of memories of their school life. Children are learning about caring for the environment through activities such as digging, planting and harvesting vegetables in the school garden. Children are now more involved in evaluating their own learning and that of other children. They can explain what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve their work. Staff have improved how they monitor and evaluate children's attainment and progress. Learning and teaching approaches are now ensuring an appropriate pace and challenge in children's learning. The education authority has taken further steps to ensure children's safety in the playground.

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

The ethos in the school continues to be welcoming with a climate of mutual trust and respect. Staff have very positive relationships with children. They now have appropriate expectations of children's attainment. Children now enjoy their learning more. They now have a clearer understanding of racial equality and celebrating diversity. Staff have begun to take more account of children's achievements to help them to succeed across all aspects of learning.

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

Leadership of the school is much improved. The headteacher has reviewed and agreed aims for the school with staff, parents and children. Staff are now much clearer about how they want the school to improve. School staff now use more effective methods to assess and improve the school's performance. As a result, children are making better progress in their learning.

8. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of improvement and the school now performs well overall. The curriculum, the pace and challenge of learning activities and the monitoring and evaluating of the quality of learning, teaching and attainment are now at a satisfactory or better level. With continued effective leadership, commitment of staff and support from the authority, the school is well placed to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the September 2008 report.

HM Inspector: June Graham

29 June 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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