



**Applecross Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
30 June 2009**

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.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in May 2009. 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 descriptions of good practice in the school and 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, one class teacher has retired. The school is now a single teacher school. There are now no children at P7.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The welcoming atmosphere in the school.
- Enthusiastic, well-behaved and well motivated learners.
- Staff's commitment in developing active learning and in improving links across the curriculum.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Nursery children are enjoying more physical development and movement activities. Across the school, children are becoming more active in their learning, particularly in science. They have been learning skills of cooperation through working with the local community to produce an effective record of local heritage. Children work well together on problem solving and writing activities. They are learning about caring for others by providing financial support for a child in Bolivia.

Overall, there are some early signs of improvement in attainment. Staff are taking more account of the need to consolidate aspects of children's learning. They are becoming more confident in assessing and evaluating children's progress. Staff now plan well together to decide what children are to learn in English language, mathematics, and social subjects. Information and communications technology and learning through play for younger children are still areas for improvement. More remains to be done to improve aspects of learning and teaching. Staff are not yet wholly successful in ensuring that all children are challenged enough in their learning.

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

Children are now learning football and badminton skills at after school activities provided by parents and staff. Teachers and parents are working together well to improve children's reading skills at helpful school information sessions about the Highland Literacy Project. Staff are working effectively with education authority staff on developing learning and teaching approaches to literacy. Children are now benefiting from regular visits to a larger primary school to develop their skills in physical education using a wider range of equipment.

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

The pupil council has been involved in improving aspects of the school. These aspects include a new climbing frame in the school playing field and playground games markings. Senior children are helping younger children with their reading. More remains to be done to ensure children take more responsibility for their learning. Staff have improved the arrangements for all children's safety within the school's playing areas. For example, children no longer use rope swings. The education authority has erected fencing at an appropriate height to ensure that animals cannot access the grounds of the school.

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

The school makes everyone feel welcome and children have very positive relationships with their teachers. Staff effectively use a range of methods to encourage children to do their best. These include a new system of awards which staff and children have set up together. Children respond well and they are eager to work on the tasks set for them. Teachers now have more consistently appropriate expectations of children's attainment. Staff are committed to the wellbeing and support of all children. They are implementing the newly devised

programme for racial equality well with a clear focus on celebrating diversity. The school has gained an Eco-Schools Scotland bronze award.

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

The headteacher, with the strong support of the education authority, is now more clearly identifying appropriate areas for school improvement. She is working well with staff to develop the school's systems for making improvements. The headteacher now needs to review and agree aims for the school with staff, parents and children. Staff are beginning to work together more effectively to evaluate the quality of the school's provision. More remains to be done to ensure that self-evaluation leads to improvements in learning and achievement.

8. What happens next?

The school, with the strong support of the education authority, shows positive signs of improvement. More remains to be done to improve the curriculum, the pace and challenge of learning activities and the monitoring and evaluating of the quality of learning, teaching and attainment. As set out in the original inspection report, we will carry out a further follow-through inspection visit within one year of the publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

HM Inspector: June Graham
30 June 2009

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