

**Port Charlotte Primary School
Islay
Argyll and Bute Council
29 August 2006**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Port Charlotte Primary School in September 2004. 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 after publication of the original report. It also indicated that HM Inspectors would continue to engage with the school and the education authority and would undertake a follow-through inspection.

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 June 2005. The report on that visit was published in September 2005. It noted signs of improvement in several aspects as well as the need for further work to ensure sustained improvement.

HM Inspectors revisited the school in May 2006 to carry out the follow-through inspection. They 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

A new headteacher had been appointed in February 2005. This appointment followed several months when the school had an acting headteacher. The education authority had worked closely with the school to prepare a comprehensive action plan for improving the school. Quality improvement officers had provided extensive support to the school since August 2004 on a range of activities designed to improve the school's capacity for improvement. These had included support for the headteacher, staff training, classroom observation and feedback, and provision of resources.

In addition to changes in headteacher, there had been other changes in teaching and support staff. The school had continued to be affected by several staff absences, some of which had been long-term. Since her appointment, the headteacher had developed a clear understanding of the work of the school. She had established good relationships with staff and pupils and a stronger partnership with parents. Regular newsletters were being issued to parents by the school and the School Board, and parents were now kept well informed about school activities. Evenings arranged for parents to discuss their children's progress were very well attended. The headteacher had shown commitment to improving the quality of pupils' educational experiences.

The opening of a well-equipped pre-five unit in October 2005 had extended the school's provision. Regular input from the headteacher and teacher of P1/P2 was helping to support children's learning and ensure effective transition from nursery to P1. Pupils in P5 to P7 were benefiting from their involvement in a digital video project, in which they were collaborating with pupils from other Islay primary schools as well as the local secondary school. The school had been selected for involvement in the BBC's Beechgrove Garden Community Garden Project, which would result in working with parents and the community to improve the school's garden.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in September 2004 identified seven 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 improvements in pupils' attainment.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher had led useful discussions with staff on key factors which have an impact on raising pupils' attainment. She was making effective use of systematic approaches to track pupils' progress through national levels of attainment appropriate to their stage.

Most pupils were performing well in their coursework. The school had made very good progress in improving standards of pupils' attainment in English language. Improvement had been particularly notable in writing. At the time of the last inspection, less than half of the pupils had been achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Most pupils were now achieving appropriate national levels in reading, writing, listening and talking. In writing, many pupils in P1 to P3 were now achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils' attainment in mathematics had also improved. Almost all pupils were now achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in this area. There was still scope for further improvement in some aspects of attainment in mathematics. The levels of challenge in tasks set were not always well matched to the needs of higher attaining pupils.

3.2 Improve the structure and quality of the curriculum.

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

The headteacher monitored closely teachers' forward plans to ensure that staff continued to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. Teachers had moved away from relying too heavily on commercial resources for curriculum programmes. They had implemented improvements in the programmes for aspects of English language and mathematics. Teachers were making increasingly effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning and develop their ICT skills. However, there were inconsistencies in the use of ICT to support and extend pupils' learning in mathematics. The headteacher had provided a good lead for staff in establishing a clearer programme for personal and social development. She had introduced improved plans for science, as part of environmental studies, health education and religious and moral education. Staff had worked together to implement structured programmes to improve pupils' handwriting and spelling. Further developments in the expressive arts were planned for session 2006-2007.

3.3 Ensure improvement in the quality of learning and teaching.

Progress made in addressing this point for action had been adequate overall.

The revised format for planning lessons had increased the focus on expected learning outcomes and next steps in pupils' learning. There continued to be examples of very good,

innovative teaching, particularly at P1/P2. Pupils were becoming increasingly involved in evaluating what they had learned and in setting targets for their work. The headteacher worked very well with all pupils during meetings of the pupil council. She was successful in encouraging pupils to collaborate with each other and to contribute well to discussion. All pupils were very attentive and were clear about the purposes of these meetings. The headteacher had improved arrangements for homework at each stage.

Teachers' participation in staff development and regular staff meetings to discuss and evaluate changes had resulted in some improvements in learning and teaching. Teachers were implementing improvements to their lessons suggested by the headteacher and one of the education authority's quality improvement officers. Each teacher had met with the education authority support officer to discuss ways of extending their use of ICT. Teachers now worked more interactively with pupils and were making better use of assessment information to plan next steps in pupils' learning. However, inconsistencies in the effectiveness of practice remained. The pace of learning and level of challenge were not always appropriate for higher attaining pupils. At P3 to P7, pupils did not always have enough opportunities to be actively involved in their learning, and they were not always fully engaged with tasks set. The headteacher should continue to work with staff to ensure more consistently effective practice in learning and teaching.

3.4 Improve the arrangements for promoting achievement and improving behaviour.

Led by the headteacher, staff had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher had been very successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and in encouraging staff to follow her good practice. She had introduced a policy for behaviour management which promoted positive behaviour. Pupils had developed better skills in working together in mixed age groups. The active schools coordinator had provided valuable support through working with groups of pupils to introduce playground games. Additional resources had also been purchased. Pupils participated well in indoor and playground games at intervals and lunch times. The janitor and support staff provided good assistance for these activities. Older pupils generally showed a caring attitude to younger ones, particularly during the very positive social experiences at lunch time. The weekly meeting of the school council provided all pupils with very good opportunities to express their views about how to improve the school and to develop citizenship skills. In addition, these meetings were used to recognise achievement and celebrate success. Pupils' achievements were also being recognised more consistently through displays throughout the school, and through information given to parents.

3.5 Ensure improvement in procedures for monitoring and evaluation.

The headteacher had made good progress with this main point for action.

The headteacher gave constructive feedback to teachers on their forward plans and had observed learning and teaching at all stages. Summary points from these observations were discussed at staff meetings. Teachers were generally more reflective about the success of their lessons and had responded positively to suggestions for improvement. The headteacher

had improved her tracking of pupils' progress, which was now more rigorous. She still needed to include more rigorous evaluation of pupils' completed work to complement her review of teachers' planning for curricular programmes. The headteacher had surveyed the views of parents, pupils and staff and was making good use of the results of these surveys in identifying areas for improvement.

3.6 Address staffing issues

The education authority had made good progress in addressing this main point for action.

It had appointed a new permanent headteacher, who had provided a strong lead to school staff in taking forward the main points for action arising from the inspection. While staff changes and absence had continued to be high for most of session 2004-2005, there had been improvements in session 2005-2006. The headteacher taught music and religious and moral education at all stages, and provided regular input to the pre-five unit. An additional staffing allocation by the education authority, to support the school in addressing its action plan, meant that the headteacher no longer had responsibilities as a class teacher. The education authority had arranged for staffing levels to remain the same in session 2006-2007 despite the anticipated drop in the school roll.

3.7 Improve aspects of the accommodation

The school and the education authority had made very good progress overall in addressing this main point for action.

Staff had improved the layout and organisation of the teaching areas. They made better use of display to provide a more stimulating and organised learning environment for pupils. The school had been successful in arranging the erection of a hut in the playground for storage of physical education equipment. The local authority had completed improvements to toilet facilities for the disabled, and had improved office accommodation. It had installed attractive accommodation for a pre-five unit, as well as resurfacing the playground and repairing the perimeter fence.

4. Conclusion

Overall, school staff were taking effective steps to implement the action plan prepared following the original inspection. Teachers showed a commitment to making improvements and were working with the headteacher to put in place appropriate measures to improve the overall quality of pupils' experiences. There were signs of improvement in several areas, such as standards of attainment and pupils' behaviour, as well as in aspects of learning and teaching. Further work was required to ensure sustained improvement. The headteacher showed commitment to improving the school and had had a positive impact on its work. The school had been very well supported by the education authority. The headteacher needed to continue to work to ensure consistently good practice in learning and teaching.

HM Inspectors judged that, working with the education authority, the school should be able to sustain and extend the improvements already made to the quality of education. They will continue to monitor progress through the District Inspector's regular contact with the education authority. They have asked the education authority for a report, by June 2007, on further improvements in learning and teaching.

Marjory Robertson, HMI
District Inspector

29 August 2006

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.

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