

**Port Charlotte Primary School
Islay
Argyll and Bute Council
Interim Follow-Through Report
27 September 2005**

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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 of the publication of the original report.

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. An inspection team carried out an interim follow-through visit to the school in June 2005. The team assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated the progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

The acting headteacher who had been in post at the time of the inspection had retired, and another acting headteacher had been appointed for a few months. Following the retirement of the substantive headteacher who had been on sick leave at the time of the original inspection, a new permanent headteacher was appointed. She had been in post for just over four months at the time of the interim follow-through inspection. The education authority had worked closely with the school to prepare a comprehensive action plan for improving the school. Quality improvement officers had provided valuable 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 materials.

In addition to changes in headteacher, there had been other changes in teaching and auxiliary staff. Overall, staff morale was now good. However, the school was still affected by several staff absences, some of which had been long-term.

In her short time in post, the new headteacher had developed a clear understanding of the work of the school. She had established good relationships with staff and pupils and was working effectively to develop 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. The headteacher showed commitment to improving the quality of pupils' educational experiences.

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 improvement in pupils' attainment.

Overall, staff were working well to address 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 had introduced improved tracking of pupils' progress through national levels of attainment appropriate to their stage.

There were signs of improvement in pupils' attainment. Most pupils were performing well in their coursework. The quality of pupils' imaginative writing had improved at P2 to P7. Teachers were beginning to show greater confidence in assessing accurately the quality of pupils' writing. A few pupils were now achieving national levels of attainment in writing earlier than might be expected. Some improvements in work in mathematics, particularly at P6, were demonstrated through the good progress that most pupils were making with their classwork. These included more extensive use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning in aspects of mathematics. Overall, however, it was too early to see the full impact of the changes that were being implemented to address previous weaknesses in attainment in English language and mathematics.

3.2 Improve the structure and quality of the curriculum.

The school was beginning to take steps to address this point for action.

The headteacher was monitoring more closely teachers' forward plans to ensure that staff continued to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. Staff were beginning to move away from relying too heavily on commercial resources for curriculum programmes. Teachers were starting to implement improvements in the programmes for aspects of English language and mathematics. However, they recognised that, for some activities, there was still an over-reliance on worksheets which did not fully meet the needs of pupils. Teachers were making increasingly effective use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. The headteacher had provided a good lead for staff in establishing a more structured programme for personal and social development. She had also introduced structured programmes to improve pupils' handwriting and spelling.

3.3 Ensure improvement in the quality of learning and teaching.

With support from the education authority, staff had taken some effective steps to address this main point for action. Further work was required to ensure consistency of good practice.

The introduction of a new format for planning lessons was helping to increase the focus on expected learning outcomes, means of judging success, and next steps in pupils' learning. There continued to be examples of very good, innovative teaching, particularly at P1/2 and P6/7. In the best practice, pupils were encouraged to think and talk about their learning, and teachers used questioning very effectively to extend pupils' thinking. At times, teachers gave very constructive feedback to pupils on their work. Teachers' participation in staff development opportunities had resulted in some improvements in learning and teaching in mathematics. Staff now worked more interactively with pupils and provided more opportunities for them to collaborate in small groups. At P6/7, pupils supported each other well in carrying out set tasks. Overall, teachers were beginning to make better use of

assessment information to inform next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils at P4/5 had made an effective start to evaluating and reviewing their personal targets. The headteacher was finalising the revision of the school's policy for homework.

Teachers were implementing suggested action points following observations of learning and teaching carried out by the headteacher and one of the education authority's quality improvement officers. Teachers also had a few opportunities to observe each other's learning and teaching, as a means of sharing best practice. Regular staff meetings had included a good focus on review and evaluation of changes and improvements in learning and teaching. The rate of improvement, however, varied across class groups, and the headteacher was working closely with education authority officers to provide targeted support to address some continuing weaknesses in teaching.

3.4 Improve the arrangements for promoting achievement and improving behaviour.

The headteacher had led staff in taking positive steps to address this main point for action.

She had been very successful in raising pupils' self esteem and was encouraging staff to follow her good practice. She had introduced a policy for behaviour management which promoted positive behaviour. Pupils were developing better skills in working together in mixed age groups. The Active Schools Co-ordinator 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 lunchtimes, and nominated which of their peers should receive certificates for being supportive and well behaved. The janitor and auxiliary staff provided good on-going assistance for these activities. The headteacher led a weekly whole school forum and used the 'clan system' to provide pupils with opportunities to express their views about how to improve the school. These meetings were also used to recognise achievement and celebrate success. Pupils' achievements were also being recognised more consistently through displays throughout the school.

3.5 Ensure improvement in procedures for monitoring and evaluation.

Since her recent appointment, the headteacher had taken appropriate steps to begin to address this main point for action.

She gave constructive feedback to teachers on their forward plans and had undertaken some observation of learning and teaching. Teachers were more reflective about the success of their lessons and had responded positively to suggestions for improvement. Some improvements had been made to tracking pupils' progress, but this aspect of monitoring needed further development to increase the rigour of the process. It should include more evaluation of pupils' completed work by the headteacher to complement her review of teachers' planning for curricular programmes.

3.6 Address the staffing issues raised in this report.

The education authority had taken some effective steps to address this main point for action, but there were still outstanding issues.

It had appointed a new permanent headteacher, who was now providing a strong lead to school staff in taking forward the main points for action arising from the inspection. The education authority had also appointed another teacher to replace one who left in December 2004. Overall, however, staff changes and absence had continued to be high. The education authority should continue with its efforts to secure more stability of staffing at all levels within the school.

3.7 Improve aspects of the accommodation as indicated in this report.

Effective steps had been taken to address some aspects of this main point for action, but urgent attention was required for remaining matters.

Staff had improved the layout and organisation of the teaching areas. They were making better use of display to provide a more stimulating and organised learning environment for pupils. Very recently, 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 made slow progress in improving toilet facilities for the disabled and in repairing the damaged perimeter fence. These tasks were now scheduled to be carried out during July and August 2005. They were linked to building work which was to be undertaken to install a pre-five unit adjacent to the primary school.

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 aspects, such as the quality of learning and teaching in most classes, standards of attainment and pupils' behaviour. Further work was required to ensure sustained improvement. The new headteacher showed strong commitment to improving the school and was beginning to have a positive impact on its work. The school had been well supported by the education authority, and its officers were also closely involved in monitoring continuing progress. It needed continued support from the education authority to address the remaining weaknesses in learning and teaching as well as the outstanding staffing and accommodation issues.

HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority. They will carry out a second follow-through visit to the school within one year of the publication of this interim report. They will report to parents and carers on the progress made.

Marjory Robertson, HMI
District Inspector

27 September 2005

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

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