

**Canisbay Primary School  
The Highland Council  
13 March 2007**

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## 1. Background

Canisbay Primary School was inspected in November and December 2006 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met representatives of the parent-teacher association and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>. There was no School Board.

The school serves the village of Canisbay and the surrounding area. The school was part of a local authority pilot for shared headship which involved the headteacher having responsibility for Keiss Primary School and Canisbay Primary School. The headteacher had been in post for 15 months. The pilot project was due to be reviewed in June 2007. At the time of the inspection the roll was 50, including 11 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

The work of the nursery class was not included in this inspection.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The positive climate, including polite and well behaved pupils.
- Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum.
- The quality of pastoral care.
- Very good arrangements to include pupils with additional support needs fully in all aspects of the life of the school.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

### **3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?**

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents were pleased with the school overall. They reported that their children enjoyed school and felt that pupils were looked after well and treated fairly by staff. Parents felt that the school provided them with helpful information about their children's progress and encouraged their children to work hard. A majority of parents felt that the school was well led. A few felt that they were not consulted effectively on decisions affecting their children. Pupils were very positive about their school. They said that their teachers explained things clearly, expected them to work hard and checked their homework. They felt that staff listened to what they had to say and helped them if they had problems. Almost a third of pupils reported that they had been bullied. However, most felt that staff had dealt with bullying incidents effectively. Staff were very positive about the school. They enjoyed working there and were very pleased with the leadership of the headteacher. They thought that they looked after pupils well and encouraged them to be confident.

### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

#### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

The school's curriculum was adequate overall. Pupils experienced progressive programmes in most curriculum areas. There were particular strengths in religious and moral education and technology. Teachers were using ICT effectively to support learning across the curriculum, particularly at P6 and P7. Pupils were also developing their skills in writing, talking and listening across the curriculum. Staff had not yet evaluated the effectiveness of additional time allocations to raising pupils' attainment in reading and writing. Pupils at P6 and P7 had developed their skills in working together and making decisions in a well planned enterprise project to make a school newspaper. There was not yet a whole-school approach to developing skills in enterprise and citizenship. Pupils had insufficient opportunity to develop their skills through physical education (PE) at all stages. The quality of teaching was good overall. Teachers were well organised and presented varied and active lessons and appropriate homework tasks to engage pupils and support their learning. They employed a range of teaching approaches including group work and whole class teaching. They used questioning well to check pupils' understanding. Their explanations were clear and they gave good instructions and directions. Teachers had begun to improve pupils' learning by sharing the aims of lessons with them, and by giving them clear feedback on how well they had performed. These approaches were not yet used consistently across the curriculum. At all stages, pupils received regular homework tasks linked to classwork.

The quality of pupils' learning was adequate. Pupils were well motivated and hard working. They showed good understanding of lessons and most were willing to contribute to them confidently. They had regular opportunities to learn from one another when working in pairs and small groups. Pupils at the upper stages benefited

from good opportunities to learn independently. In writing, pupils were beginning to improve their work with the help of feedback from teachers. A start had been made to getting pupils to set their own learning targets. Across the school, pupils had too few opportunities to take responsibility for improving their learning. Teachers' use of assessment was not yet fully effective in identifying pupils' next steps in learning. Pupils at the early stages had too few opportunities to learn through play. Staff had successfully promoted pupils' wider achievements. Through the work of the pupil council, all pupils had been involved in taking responsibility for making improvements to the school. They had developed a sense of pride in their school's achievements by participating in a range of inter-school sports events. All pupils had participated in, and won, a local inter-school sports tournament. A number of pupils had achieved success performing in the Caithness Music Festival. Regular planned opportunities for pupils to talk and sing in front of an audience had developed their confidence and presentation skills. Pupils at the upper stages carried out ambitious enterprise opportunities responsibly and demonstrated well developed organisational and planning skills.

### **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening and talking, and most were doing so in reading and writing. Pupils requiring additional support with their learning were making good progress. Across the school, pupils listened attentively and responded well in discussions. They expressed their views clearly on a range of topics and valued the opinions of others. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrated a positive approach to reading. Most read fluently and regularly for pleasure. The introduction of a whole school literacy project was having a positive impact on learning and had encouraged an increased interest in reading. Pupils at the early stages were making very good progress in developing literacy skills. They read confidently and could extract information from texts. At the later stages, a few pupils had difficulty in identifying the main ideas from information texts and aspects of a writer's style. Pupils planned and produced expressive pieces of writing competently but they were less good at applying their writing skills across the curriculum. The quality of presentation of pupils' written work was too variable across classes and spelling was weak for too many pupils.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. Almost all pupils were reaching appropriate national levels of attainment. Those pupils who had not achieved these levels were making good progress in their learning. Almost all pupils at the early stages had achieved national levels earlier than might normally be expected. This pattern of attainment had remained steady over recent years. Pupils at all stages had drawn graphs regularly for a range of purposes. They were skilled at interpreting a range of graphical information. Across the school, pupils had well developed skills in mental calculation. By the middle stages pupils could multiply and divide quickly and accurately. Pupils at P2 could identify coins and give change from small denominations. Pupils at all stages could measure accurately, and at the middle stages they had a good understanding of area and volume. By P6 pupils worked confidently to calculate directions and bearings. Pupils could solve mathematical problems

associated with their class work but they lacked experience in solving more complex problems.

### **5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?**

Staff matched tasks and activities well to the needs of most pupils. In a number of lessons they used visual resources effectively to assist pupils' understanding. The use of writing targets, combined with helpful comments in jotters, was helping pupils to improve their writing. Pupils generally benefited from appropriately challenging whole class lessons. Learning activities did not always help higher attaining pupils to achieve their potential. Across the school, staff had been effective in identifying pupils who required additional support. These pupils had appropriate long- and short-term learning targets in their individualised education programmes, and were making good progress. The well planned provision for a few pupils with additional support needs was enhanced by the very effective work of the support for learning teacher. Skilled classroom assistants provided appropriate support and challenge to pupils and communicated effectively with teachers when planning their work.

### **6. How good is the environment for learning?**

| <b>Aspect</b> | <b>Comment</b>  |
|---------------|---|
| Pastoral care | The quality of pastoral care was very good. Staff provided a secure and supportive environment for pupils and responded sensitively to any concerns. They were fully aware of procedures relating to child protection and the care and welfare of pupils, including safe use of the Internet. The school's health education programme had an appropriate focus, including information about drugs, personal safety and other sensitive health matters. The personal and social education programme had effectively raised pupils' awareness of bullying. Minor incidents between pupils were appropriately resolved by playground supervisors and teachers. The school had provided helpful guidelines for parents on the prevention of bullying. Effective arrangements helped pupils transfer from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Wick High School. |

| <b>Aspect</b>  | <b>Comment</b>   |
|--|--|
| Quality of accommodation and facilities  | <p>The quality of accommodation was good. Staff organised the spacious classrooms well to enable pupils to access learning resources. A central area provided good accommodation for group work and assemblies. A few computers and two electronic whiteboards were well used by pupils and staff. The school and its environment had appropriate security arrangements and were accessible to disabled users.</p> <p>Playgrounds were well developed to provide a range of learning and play environments. Limited suitable hard standing restricted opportunities for play in wet weather. The school did not make sufficient use of the very good space in the local hall for PE.</p>   |
| Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality | <p>Pupils were friendly, welcoming and very well behaved. They treated pupils who experienced difficulty with their learning or behaviour with understanding and respect. Relationships between pupils and staff were very positive and staff worked as a close team. They had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their approach to learning. Their expectations of what pupils were capable of learning were too low. Staff used praise well to motivate pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils responded enthusiastically to a number of systems for formally recognising and rewarding good effort. The pupil council was very effective in gathering pupils' views about the school.</p> <p>Pupils at all stages carried out a range of classroom and whole-school responsibilities. Pupils had regular opportunities for religious observance. Those at P6 and P7 had presented an assembly about the many cultures within Scottish society.</p> <p>Pupils needed to develop a deeper understanding of the issues affecting people in other cultural groups. The school operated an effective racial equality policy and had appropriate systems for dealing with any incidents of racism. Staff had not all been trained in racial equality procedures.</p> |

| Aspect                                     | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Partnership with parents and the community | The school's partnerships with parents and the community were adequate. The school provided helpful information to parents on their children's progress in reports. Regular newsletters kept parents well informed and included information about improvements to teaching and learning. Parents received appropriate information about health education, including sensitive health issues. Their views had been sought on some aspects of the school's work and they had received a summary of the school's development plan. Parents assisted with educational visits but there was scope to involve them more effectively in supporting their children's learning. The school participated in a range of community activities and had well-developed links with local medical and emergency services to support the curriculum. Pupils had benefited from working with larger groups of peers in joint educational visits and sporting activities with Keiss primary school. |

## 7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Canisbay Primary School provided a good standard of education. Pupils were confident, well behaved and benefited from a positive and supportive ethos. The curriculum provided a broad range of learning activities although insufficient time was given to PE. Pupils benefited from good teaching but weaknesses in teachers' use of assessment had meant that some pupils were not making enough progress in their learning. Pupils with additional support needs were very well included in the school. Staff needed to involve parents more fully in supporting their children's learning.

The headteacher provided good strategic leadership to the school. She had a sound knowledge of recent educational developments. Her interpersonal skills included the ability to create confidence and motivate teachers and pupils. She had generated positive relationships within the school and had led improvements in literacy and in the school's ethos very effectively. She had been less successful in engaging parents in supporting learning. Pupils benefited from opportunities to work in larger groups during joint events with Keiss primary school. Arrangements were in place for communication and decision making when the headteacher was in Keiss primary school. The school had introduced a number of systems for evaluating its work and these had accurately identified some key areas for improvement. The headteacher had observed lessons, evaluated teachers' planning and pupils' work and monitored overall attainment. She had sought the views of parents and pupils on aspects of the school's work. The headteacher had started to develop a culture of improvement in the school by providing quality staff development and encouraging staff to evaluate learning.

Teachers now needed clearer feedback on how teaching and learning should be improved. Overall, the school's approaches to self evaluation had the potential to bring about improvement but had yet to be fully implemented. With further support from the education authority, the school had the capacity for continued improvement.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to improve the curriculum, meeting pupils' learning needs, partnership with parents and self evaluation. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve the overall quality of the curriculum;
- increase pupils' involvement in improving their own learning;
- use assessment more effectively to meet pupils' learning needs;
- involve parents in supporting their children's learning; and
- continue to improve approaches to self evaluation.

### **What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Jacqueline Sinclair  
HM Inspector

13 March 2007

## Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

| <b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b> |          |
|---|----------|
| Structure of the curriculum                             | adequate |
| The teaching process                                    | good     |
| Pupils' learning experiences                            | adequate |
| Pupils' attainment in English language                  | good     |
| Pupils' attainment in mathematics                       | good     |

| <b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b> |          |
|---|----------|
| Meeting pupils' needs                           | adequate |

| <b>How good is the environment for learning?</b> |           |
|--|-----------|
| Pastoral care                                    | very good |
| Accommodation and facilities                     | good      |
| Climate and relationships                        | very good |
| Expectations and promoting achievement           | good      |
| Equality and fairness                            | good      |
| Partnership with parents and the community       | adequate  |

| <b>Leading and improving the school</b> |          |
|---|----------|
| Leadership of the headteacher           | good     |
| Self-evaluation                         | adequate |

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

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

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below. Where any one group had five or less respondees then, in order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided.

| <b>What parents thought the school did well</b>  | <b>What parents think the school could do better</b>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided stimulating and challenging work and encouraged their children to work hard.</li> <li>• Gave them helpful information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• Dealt effectively with inappropriate behaviour.</li> <li>• Looked after pupils well and treated them fairly.</li> <li>• Encouraged mutual respect between pupils and staff.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult them more fully on decisions which affect their children.</li> <li>• Improve aspects of the school's leadership.</li> </ul> |
| <b>What pupils thought the school did well</b>   | <b>What pupils think the school could do better</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers explained things clearly, expected them to work hard and checked their homework.</li> <li>• The school helped them to keep safe and healthy.</li> <li>• Teachers listened to what they said, and they knew what to do if they were upset.</li> <li>• Staff were good at dealing with bullying.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>What staff thought the school did well</b>  | <b>What staff think the school could do better</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff were pleased with all aspects of the school.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>  |

## **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 Education, Culture and Sport, 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, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA or by telephoning 01506 600384. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, Acting HMCI, at the above address.

### **Our complaints procedure**

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of the HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure leaflet is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 or e-mail [ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk).

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