

**Lochinver Primary School  
The Highland Council  
25 September 2007**

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## 1. Background

Lochinver Primary School was inspected in May 2007 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 the chairperson of the School Board, and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The school serves the village of Lochinver and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 48. 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.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Polite, well-behaved and hard-working pupils and the inclusive ethos of the school.
- Staff's attention to promoting pupils' health and safety.
- Supportive parents and the strong relationship between the school and the local community.

## 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, pupils and staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. Parents felt that the school had a good reputation in the local community and that teachers set high standards. They were very satisfied with the attention given to the care and welfare of their children and thought that staff made parents and visitors feel welcome. A few did not think that school buildings were kept in good order. Pupils said that teachers expected them to work hard and gave them a say in how to make the school better. They thought that the school helped them to keep themselves safe and

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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.

healthy. Staff liked working in the school which they felt had a happy, friendly atmosphere. They felt that the headteacher did not always communicate effectively with them.

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

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

The quality of the curriculum was adequate. Teachers provided a broad curriculum for pupils and had devoted additional time within the school week to English language and mathematics. They had not yet evaluated the effectiveness of this arrangement on improving pupils' achievements. Pupils' learning was enriched by visiting specialists in art and design, music and physical education. The school was not yet providing pupils with two hours of physical education each week. Staff had used community links effectively to extend the range of pupils' achievements in enterprise, citizenship and environmental education. Teachers had given insufficient attention to ensuring that pupils' learning progressed from stage to stage in environmental studies and religious and moral education (RME). There were too few opportunities for cross-curricular work in English language and mathematics. The quality of teaching was adequate overall. Teachers gave clear instructions and explanations. Interactions between teachers and pupils were positive and praise was used effectively to motivate pupils. Teachers mostly made good use of questions to check pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. They did not consistently share with pupils what they expected them to learn in lessons. Teachers made insufficient use of computers to support and extend pupils' learning across the curriculum. They used regular homework effectively to support learning and involve parents.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was adequate. Pupils were very well behaved and worked conscientiously. They were too often asked to undertake tasks which were insufficiently challenging or stimulating. Across the school, almost all pupils worked independently with minimal supervision. Pupils cooperated and supported each other well in a range of activities in which they were actively involved in their learning. These included work in art and design and in undertaking environmental studies research. There were not enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or to work collaboratively. In too many lessons the pace was insufficiently brisk.

The school provided pupils with a range of appropriate opportunities to successfully develop their confidence and sense of responsibility. Members of the pupil council regularly made helpful suggestions and influenced improvements. For example, they had initiated and organised a recycling project. Junior road safety officers demonstrated initiative in carrying out their roles. At all stages, pupils effectively exercised responsibility when carrying out enterprise activities. At P6/P7, pupils had developed their organisational and planning skills when redesigning the school's grounds. Pupils were proud of their school's achievements in a range of sports, and the cross-country running team had achieved regular success in competitions. Regular opportunities for pupils to perform to an audience had developed pupils' confidence and their presentation skills. Pupils learned about the needs of others by raising significant funds for local, national and international charities.

## **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was weak. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking and reading. In writing, less than half of the pupils at the early stages achieved appropriate national levels. By the upper stages most pupils were achieving these levels. A few pupils at the upper stages were achieving them earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress in their learning. At all stages, pupils listened carefully to instructions and directions. Most pupils across the stages joined class discussions confidently. Pupils' skills in listening and talking to each other in groups were not effectively developed. At the early stages, pupils were developing fluency in reading skills. A few pupils at P7 demonstrated skill in extracting information from non-fiction texts. Pupils' progress in improving their writing skills was too slow. They did not consistently apply to their own writing what they had learned about how writers used language. At the upper stages, pupils' skills in writing at greater length were not well developed.

## **Mathematics**

The quality of attainment in mathematics was adequate. Across the school most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Early gains in attainment were not consistently sustained as the pupils moved through the school. Pupils, including those with additional support needs, were making adequate progress in classwork. In information handling, most pupils could interpret graphs and tables but they were not confident in collecting, organising and displaying data. By P7, pupils were insufficiently skilled in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to create graphs, spreadsheets or databases. Most pupils displayed effective skills in mental and written calculation, but were not skilled in estimating to check their answers. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of appropriate aspects of measurement and shape. By P6, they could explain appropriate aspects of angles and bearings effectively. Across the stages, pupils' knowledge of strategies to use in solving mathematical problems was not sufficiently well developed.

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

Staff provided effective support to pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning. Teachers used an appropriate range of strategies to identify such pupils. However, there were important weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting pupils' learning overall. Teachers had not been fully successful in ensuring appropriate challenge for all. They did not make effective use of assessment information to identify and plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils were not sufficiently involved in setting targets for their learning and too many were unclear as to how to improve their work. Support staff provided well planned assistance for teachers. The support for learning teacher worked cooperatively and effectively with class teachers to offer support and challenge in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. A few pupils with individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were making good progress towards achieving their learning targets. The school had helpful arrangements to support pupils transferring from pre-school to P1 and from P7 to Ullapool High School.

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

| <b>Aspect</b>                           | <b>Comment</b>  |
|---|---|
| Pastoral care                           | <p>The overall quality of pastoral care was good. Pupils felt safe and well looked after in the school. There were effective arrangements for them to raise any concerns, including confidential access to the school nurse. Staff were caring and committed and knew pupils and their families well. Staff were all familiar with the school's procedures for child protection and dealing with incidents of bullying. A few ancillary staff had not yet received formal training in child protection. Staff encouraged pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles through a daily walking challenge. Pupils at the middle and upper stages demonstrated responsible attitudes to their personal and internet safety.</p>  |
| Quality of accommodation and facilities | <p>Pupils benefited from spacious classrooms, and a general purpose room was used well to provide pupils with experiences in art and design and music. The school building was appropriately secure. Pupils at P6/P7 were learning business skills through making improvements to the outdoor play area. Facilities included areas for all pupils to learn about the natural environment, for practising sports and developing fitness. Pupils' physical education and recreational opportunities were enriched by regular use of the well equipped local sports centre.</p> <p>The school's lack of computer resources had limited pupils' use of ICT in supporting and extending their learning. Access for those with restricted mobility was limited.</p> |

| <b>Aspect</b>  | <b>Comment</b>  |
|--|---|
| Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality | <p>All staff, pupils and parents took pride in their school and were welcoming to visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils were very positive. Pupils were well-behaved, courteous and friendly. Staff had appropriate expectations of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They did not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' attainment. Approaches to rewarding pupils' achievements were inconsistent. Pupils at the upper stages acted responsibly looking after pupils in P1 at play times. Weekly whole school assemblies provided appropriate opportunities for religious observance. The school actively promoted an inclusive ethos and a sense of fairness. For example, in health education younger pupils were learning how they might make a new pupil feel welcome. The school had clear approaches to promoting race equality. Pupils developed an understanding of religious diversity in RME lessons, and were aware of issues in society including discrimination.</p>   |
| Partnership with parents and the community                                     | <p>The headteacher and staff had developed good partnerships with parents and very strong links with the local community. Parents played an active role in school life by assisting with educational visits, out-of-school-hours activities and social events. The School Board was very supportive of the school. The school kept parents well informed about its work through regular, informative newsletters and annual written reports. Parents had been consulted about sensitive health issues, the anti-bullying policy and the promotion of healthy eating. A homework guide for parents provided helpful hints on how to support their children's learning. Staff did not yet involve parents enough in supporting their children's learning or share the school's plans for improvement with them. Several organisations in the community, including the local arts trust and the school nurse, made important contributions to pupils' learning. Pupils were developing a sound understanding of their environment through extensive links with the local ranger.</p> |

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

Lochinver Primary School provided an inclusive and caring environment. Pupils were happy at school, behaved well and worked hard. The quality of education provided for pupils required improvement. The school did not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' achievements. Pupils' progress was weak in English language and in aspects of mathematics. There were weaknesses in the quality of pupils' learning experiences and in how staff met pupils' learning needs. As a result, too many pupils were not reaching their potential.

The headteacher was approachable, and committed to the school and its pupils. In building the school's positive ethos, she had gained strong support from parents and the local community. There were important weaknesses in her leadership for learning and she had not provided a clear strategic direction for the school. The headteacher had introduced some improvements to the teaching of aspects of English language. She had been less successful in introducing more structured planning of pupils' learning experiences. The headteacher had not established and implemented sufficiently rigorous approaches to self-evaluation. She visited classes, inspected pupils' work and reviewed teachers' plans but these approaches had been too informal. Weaknesses in the quality of pupils' learning and attainment had not been fully recognised or addressed. Staff were not given sufficient guidance from the headteacher on how to improve their practice. Staff, parents and pupils had not been fully involved in evaluating and improving the work of the school. As a result, the school had not identified important priorities for improvement. The headteacher now required the active support of the education authority to develop the school's capacity for improvement.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- teachers' planning of learning activities to meet the needs of all learners and ensure that they make good progress;
- attainment in English language and mathematics;
- leadership for learning; and
- the school's procedures to monitor and improve the quality of learning, teaching and pupils' attainment.

### **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. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in a report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Jacqueline Sinclair  
HM Inspector

25 September 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                                    | adequate |
| Pupils' learning experiences                            | adequate |
| Pupils' attainment in English language                  | weak     |
| Pupils' attainment in mathematics                       | adequate |

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

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

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

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.

| <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>• It had a good reputation in the community.</li> <li>• They were made to feel welcome and any concerns they raised were dealt with well.</li> <li>• Their children were well looked after and treated fairly.</li> <li>• Children were encouraged to work hard.</li> <li>• They were provided with helpful progress reports and useful parents' evenings.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents thought that the school building was not kept in good order.</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 helped them with their work.</li> <li>• Staff knew them well, treated them fairly and told them when they had done well.</li> <li>• Staff listened to what they said and gave them a say in how to make the school better.</li> <li>• The school helped them to keep safe and healthy.</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>• They enjoyed working in the school.</li> <li>• They believed pupils were enthusiastic about learning, behaved well and showed respect for staff.</li> <li>• They set high standard for pupils' attainment and told them when they had done well.</li> <li>• They showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils.</li> <li>• They promoted good relations with the community.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve communication between the headteacher and staff.</li> <li>• Increase their opportunities to be involved in decision making.</li> <li>• Involve them more in discussion about how to improve the school.</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, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

### **HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail [HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk). A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 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 (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freeport EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) 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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