

**St Bride's Primary School
and Nursery Class
Onich
The Highland Council
24 June 2008**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	4
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Leading and improving the school	6
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	8
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	9
How can you contact us?	10

1. Background

St Bride's Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in March 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and 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 the quality of the children's experience in the nursery, pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met representatives of the Parent Council and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the villages of Onich and North Ballachulich and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 31, including six 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.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The attention paid by staff to pupils' personal and social development.
- Confident, responsible nursery children and primary pupils who were keen to learn.
- Positive relationships between parents, pupils and staff and the involvement of parents in supporting the work of the school.

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 very positive about all aspects of the school and the nursery class. They highlighted the welcoming atmosphere and the mutual respect that existed between pupils and staff. They thought that the school had a very good reputation in the local community and was well led. Pupils commented positively about many aspects of their school lives. These aspects included the help they received from staff and the

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

opportunities they had to take part in a variety of interesting activities. Pupils felt safe and happy at school. Staff thought they worked well as a team. They felt that the school was very well supported by parents and the local community.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

In the nursery, children benefited from a broad curriculum with stimulating learning experiences. Staff had not yet ensured that the curriculum was sufficiently balanced across all areas and encouraged depth in children's learning. Children participated enthusiastically and confidently in the planned activities. At the primary stages, the school provided a broad range of interesting activities for pupils. Staff placed good emphasis on developing pupils' social and personal skills, particularly through environmental education and enterprise education. Teachers did not always make enough use of other opportunities to link pupils' learning across the curriculum. The visiting teacher of physical education and the active school coordinator enhanced pupils' experiences. Staff had recently adopted new approaches to teaching literacy and this was beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' reading skills. They had not yet developed a whole-school approach to teaching problem-solving and enquiry skills in mathematics. Teachers were developing aspects of pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) but were not yet fully integrating these skills across the curriculum. Staff in the nursery class consistently and effectively used questioning and discussion to extend children's knowledge and thinking. Praise was used appropriately to motivate and encourage children's learning. In the primary classes, the overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers gave clear explanations and instructions. Most shared learning intentions with pupils, involved them in evaluating what they had learned and gave helpful advice on how to improve their work. Teachers had not yet ensured this was done consistently in all lessons. Homework was set regularly and supported pupils well in their learning.

Overall, nursery children were making sound progress in key aspects of the curriculum. Most children were developing effective observational skills and used ICT well to enhance their learning. They were learning about growth and recycling through planting, growing vegetables and making compost in their garden. Children expressed their ideas creatively through a wide range of art and craft activities. Children did not have sufficient opportunities and encouragement to develop imaginative role-play. They were developing skills in pedalling, climbing and had regular access to energetic play outdoors. All were developing good hand control through a range of appropriate resources. In the primary classes, the overall quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. Pupils were enthusiastic and well-motivated learners. They were not always clear about their individual learning targets in language and mathematics and about what they had to do to improve. Teachers were successfully increasing opportunities for pupils to develop skills in working independently and collaboratively, but there was scope to develop this further. Pupils cooperated well in reading and physical education lessons and when carrying out practical mathematical activities. At the early stages, staff were developing effective opportunities for pupils to learn through play, making good links with the nursery curriculum. Pupils in P1 to P4 responded positively to opportunities to be independent and to take responsibility for aspects of their learning.

At the upper stages, pupils took part enthusiastically in practical science work and were able to plan a fair test and reflect on their findings. They were learning about the life cycle of salmon and were able to discuss aspects of the world of work.

Staff successfully promoted pupils' wider achievements. They placed a high emphasis on developing pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, pupils were confident in expressing their views and willing to tackle new experiences. Pupils demonstrated responsibility through serving on the pupil council, organising the healthy tuck shop, acting as playground monitors and taking responsibility for a range of routine tasks. They successfully involved parents and the local community in raising funds for charities. Staff collaborated with parents and staff from other agencies to ensure pupils had access to a variety of sporting and cultural activities, including skiing, mountain biking, attending music festivals and visits to art galleries and museums. Pupils used their enterprise skills effectively to organise a book week and a Christmas concert.

English language

In the nursery class, children were making good progress in communication and language. They talked confidently to one another and to adults. They enjoyed listening to stories and poems. With adult encouragement a few made books. They recognised their name in print and most were developing their early writing skills effectively. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Across the school, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. A few were attaining these levels earlier than might normally have been expected. Those experiencing particular difficulties were well supported and were making good progress. At all stages, pupils spoke confidently for a variety of purposes. At the middle and upper stages, pupils expressed their views fluently but were less skilled in taking part in structured group discussions. Pupils were benefiting from an increased emphasis on the development of their reading skills. At the early and middle stages, almost all pupils read fluently and with good understanding. At the upper stages, most enjoyed reading and could confidently discuss aspects of the writer's craft. At all stages, most pupils wrote well for a variety of purposes. They were developing an appropriate knowledge of spelling and grammar and presented their written work neatly.

Mathematics

In the nursery class, children were making effective progress in early mathematics. They were developing an appropriate understanding of mathematical language through play. They were learning to count and sequence numbers through simple games and songs and were willing to tackle problems and try out a range of appropriate strategies. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Across the school, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment and a few at all stages were attaining these levels earlier than might normally have been expected. Those experiencing difficulties were making good progress in their coursework. Across the school, pupils had a sound understanding of information handling and were able to create and interpret an appropriate range of graphs. Almost all pupils were developing good skills in written and mental calculation. At the upper stages, pupils were confident in estimating and measuring volume and almost all

worked confidently with fractions and percentages. At all stages, pupils were able to identify an appropriate range of two- and three-dimensional shapes and discuss their properties. Pupils could not identify and discuss a range of strategies they could use to solve problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Staff in the nursery met the needs of children well. They made sound observations of each child's learning and planned appropriately for their next steps in learning. A very good start had been made in tracking children's progress. In the primary classes, arrangements to meet pupils' learning needs were good overall. Most pupils were making progress at an appropriate rate. There were a few examples of lessons in which the pace of learning was too slow for some pupils. Teachers had recently improved opportunities for pupils to learn through a variety of helpful activities. Staff had improved their practice and had moved away from an over-reliance on textbook based activities. The support for learning teacher, class teachers and the classroom assistant collaborated effectively to help pupils requiring extra support. For pupils with additional support needs, staff prepared and implemented well developed individualised educational programmes. These were shared with parents and pupils and set out appropriate learning targets, which were reviewed regularly. Staff liaised effectively with professionals from a variety of support services to provide additional help for pupils who were experiencing difficulties.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>All staff were caring and approachable. They knew pupils well as individuals and showed a strong commitment to ensuring pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing. Appropriate policies and procedures were in place for child protection and anti-bullying and all staff were aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe. Nursery children were not consistently well supervised by an adult in the playground when playing outside with the primary pupils. Pupils felt they could talk to staff if they had a problem. The school successfully promoted healthy lifestyles and encouraged pupils to treat themselves and others with respect. Staff shared information with other schools and agencies as appropriate to support pupils transferring into and out of the school. The school had very good arrangements to support pupils when they moved from nursery into P1 and from P7 to Lochaber High School.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Management and use of resources and space for learning	The recently extended school building provided an attractive, well-organised environment for learning. Pupils' work and information for pupils and parents was attractively displayed throughout. The P1 to P4 classroom was small but the class teacher made effective use of the space available. Outdoor play areas provided good space for pupils to be active at break times. The building was appropriately secure and there was effective access for disabled users.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	The school had a welcoming and purposeful atmosphere. Staff and pupils were proud of their school. Pupils were friendly, courteous and worked conscientiously. Staff were very committed to the school and worked hard to provide a wide range of visits and activities for their pupils. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff were very positive. Staff expected pupils to behave well and work hard in class. They did not always have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' attainment in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils were treated equally and fairly. Staff encouraged pupils to be tolerant and develop positive attitudes towards diversity. Pupils were developing an appropriate awareness of the beliefs and customs of other world religions. Weekly assemblies provided appropriate opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating pupils' successes.
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school successfully involved parents in the life and work of the school. Parents were kept well informed of events and development work in school. They spoke appreciatively of a recent curricular evening at which they discussed the school's new approach to teaching literacy and the revised homework policy. Parents supported the school through helping with outings, enterprise activities and school concerts. The recently formed Parent Council effectively promoted communication between home and school and raised funds for the school. Parents were consulted appropriately on sensitive health issues. They were encouraged to contact staff if they had any queries or concerns. They had very good opportunities to discuss their children's progress informally. Parents received helpful written reports on their children's progress each session.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

St Bride's Primary School provided a happy and purposeful learning environment in which pupils were developing very good personal and social skills. They were hard working and successful learners. Staff knew their pupils well and were strongly committed to providing them with an interesting variety of learning activities. The quality of teaching was good overall and improving. Staff had not yet paid sufficient attention to developing pupils' skills in using ICT and in solving mathematical problems.

The headteacher provided good leadership. She had established very positive relationships with parents, staff and the local community. Pupils found her to be approachable and helpful. Together with the P1 to P4 class teacher, she was successfully implementing a more active approach to learning and teaching. She now needed to offer more direction to staff to ensure a consistent approach to learning and teaching. Arrangements for self-evaluation were adequate. The headteacher and staff regularly discussed the effectiveness of their work and had a sound knowledge of pupils' strengths and development needs. The headteacher monitored plans and provided staff with informal feedback. Pupils and parents were asked for feedback about aspects of the work of the school. Appropriate priorities for improvement were set out in a development plan and staff were making good progress towards meeting these targets. The headteacher and staff had not yet developed these approaches effectively to establish more systematic and rigorous arrangements for self-evaluation. With continuing support from the education authority, the school was well placed to continue to improve the quality of education provided for pupils.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no recommendations or requirements.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve attainment, learning and teaching. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems and in using information and communications technology;
- continue to increase opportunities for pupils to be active and independent learners;
- ensure that tasks and activities provide sufficient challenge to meet the needs of all nursery children and primary pupils; and
- improve arrangements for self-evaluation to ensure consistency in approaches to learning and teaching.

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.

Isabel Bolton
Managing Inspector

17 June 2008

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.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	good
Improvement in performance: English language	good
Improvement in performance: mathematics	good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs	good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	very good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Improvement through 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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoyed being at school and found school work stimulating and challenging. • The school had a good reputation in the local community. • Staff treated children fairly. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They felt safe and well looked after. • All pupils were treated fairly and were told when they did something well. • Teachers checked their homework and expected them to work as hard as they could. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were very satisfied with all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

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, Longman East, Inverness IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website 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 and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail 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.

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, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsa.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsa.org.uk.

Crown Copyright 2008

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.