

**Roy Bridge Primary School
The Highland Council
28 October 2008**

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1. Background

Roy Bridge Primary School was inspected in June 2008 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 Roy Bridge Primary School Parent Group and a group of parents¹.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school serves the village of Roy Bridge and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 25. The headteacher, as part of the authority's shared headship initiative, was also headteacher of the nearby Spean Bridge Primary School. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- High standards of attainment, particularly in reading.
- Pupils' work on Scots language.
- The school's successful links with the community.
- Highly motivated, well behaved and enthusiastic pupils.
- Effective leadership of the headteacher.

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.

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

Parents were very satisfied with almost all aspects of the school. All felt that their children were treated fairly and that staff showed concern for their care and welfare. They thought the school had a good reputation in the community. They found parents' evenings helpful and informative. Parents stated that the school buildings were not kept in good order. Pupils were very positive regarding all aspects of school life. All enjoyed being at the school and thought the school helped them to keep safe and healthy. They thought teachers listened to what they had to say and helped them sort things out when they were upset. All staff liked working in the school and stated that the school was well led. They thought that they worked hard to promote and maintain good relationships with the local community.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The school provided pupils with broad and balanced learning experiences. Staff successfully used additional time given to English language and mathematics to maintain high standards of attainment. The good curriculum included enterprise education and citizenship activities and ensured the effective development of pupils' skills in music and drama. It took good account of Scottish culture. The planned use of visits and visitors enriched the curriculum and widened pupils' learning experiences. Pupils' language skills were enhanced through effective community links and use of the surrounding environment. Pupils at P1-P3 had too few opportunities to develop their skills in physical education. The programme for personal and social development did not ensure that pupils consistently built on their prior learning. Overall, the quality of teaching was good. There were some examples of very good direct teaching at the upper stages. Teachers worked effectively with pupils in class, group and individual situations and used praise effectively to motivate pupils and build their confidence. Most teachers shared the purposes of lessons clearly and made effective use of questioning to promote pupils' thinking and check their understanding. Staff had made a good start to providing written feedback to pupils, particularly in English language activities. In other areas of the curriculum, pupils were not always sure of how to improve their work. Staff were successful in making homework relevant and interesting to support pupils' learning.

The quality of pupils' learning was good. Across the school, pupils were well motivated and keen to learn. They benefited from good steps taken by teachers to create meaningful links between aspects of the curriculum. Pupils were very hard working and reflected confidently on their own learning and that of other pupils. Teachers had engaged in helpful personal learning planning with every pupil. Overall, pupils made good progress with their coursework. The pace of pupils' learning, particularly at the early stages, was at times too slow.

Improvements in performance

The school had successfully improved its performance in a number of key areas. Overall, this amounted to a very good improvement in performance.

In English language, standards in reading and writing were very good and had been maintained over the last three years. Standards had remained high in listening and talking. Almost all pupils achieved appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. At all stages, almost all pupils attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making very good progress. Across the school, pupils listened carefully to teachers and each other. They responded very well to questions from staff. Pupils were confident during discussions in groups and were highly motivated to talk about challenging issues. At the early and middle stages, pupils were making a very good start to learning to read and write. At the upper stages, pupils effectively described how authors created effects and understood the differences between different styles of writing. Pupils wrote very well for a range of purposes. Those at the upper stages wrote and analysed their own very well crafted imaginative stories. Across the school, standards of spelling, grammar and presentation were high.

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good and continuing to improve. High levels of attainment had been maintained over several years. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Almost all pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils were able to handle and interpret information accurately using an appropriate range of graphs and tables. They made effective use of computer software and most were skilled in making calculations involving number, measurement and money. At all stages, pupils demonstrated good skills in mental calculation. A few pupils at the upper stages were not sufficiently quick or accurate in their responses. At each stage, pupils could identify and fully describe the properties of a range of shapes. Their skills in problem-solving and enquiry were developing very well.

Pupils' skills in music, Scots language and aspects of environmental studies were very good. For example, pupils demonstrated advanced skills reading musical notation and playing musical instruments such as the cello, violin, descant recorder and accordion. Pupils enjoyed reading stories in Scots and could accurately explain the meaning of a text. At the upper stages, pupils had completed a study of the life and times of famous Egyptian kings. They demonstrated a very good understanding of key events from the period they had studied.

The school had taken very good steps to develop pupils' wider achievements. Across the school, pupils demonstrated high achievement in a wide range of contexts. They were making very good progress in developing their confidence, self-esteem and skills as active citizens. The school had gained Health Promoting School status in 2004. Pupils were given regular opportunities to make decisions within the pupil council and as playground friends. They were gaining a very good understanding of the importance of contributing to society through well established links with the local community. For example, pupils had worked effectively with several community organisations to help design and make a village garden.

The school had made very good progress in addressing the priorities within its improvement plan. The activities undertaken had had a positive impact on pupils' experiences. Staff had developed new approaches to teaching reading and used resources effectively to motivate pupils. Teachers used information and communications technology skilfully to help pupils review their own learning. Overall, the school knew itself well and was committed to continuous improvement.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Arrangements to meet the needs of all pupils were good. Teachers matched learning activities and teaching approaches to meet pupils' learning needs. At all stages, teachers had developed personal learning plans for pupils. They had successfully involved pupils and parents in this process. The learning targets within these plans were too general to enable staff and parents to monitor pupils' success and progress. The school had an effective approach to identifying pupils requiring additional support with their learning. Pupils with additional support needs received valuable support from teaching staff and a range of external agencies. Pupils entering P1 were supported well. Staff had developed good arrangements to give pupils additional support in preparation for their move to Lochaber High School.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	Staff had put in place good arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. The headteacher and staff knew pupils very well and were sensitive to their personal, social and emotional needs. The school effectively promoted healthy lifestyles by, for example, organising a fruit tuck shop for pupils. Pupils liked school lunch menus. Child protection policy and procedures were in place but these were not fully understood by all staff. Pupils felt safe and knew the school's approaches to tackling instances of bullying. They had access to a suggestion box where they left notes raising any concerns. Pupils also received effective support from members of the school's pupil council. All pupils were confident that staff would take appropriate action to support them if they had a problem.

Aspect	Comment
<p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p>	<p>The school accommodation, resources and facilities were unsatisfactory. There were a number of significant weaknesses which impacted upon pupils' health, safety and learning. Two classrooms were in a very poor state of repair and temperatures within these areas could not be controlled effectively. Security arrangements required review. Resources were out-dated and required improvement. The poor quality and appearance of the building detracted from the positive ethos that staff were seeking to establish within the school. Staff created attractive displays using pupils' work but these were regularly damaged by the ingress of water. Access to the Internet was limited to one classroom and was unreliable. Parts of the playground surfaces were uneven and required attention. Access to parts of the building was not suitable for those with restricted mobility.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The school provided a very supportive and caring environment for pupils and staff. Office staff, classroom assistants and regular visitors to the school contributed very effectively to the life and work of the school. Pupils were proud of their school. They were well-behaved, polite and confident in their dealings with adults. Teachers had appropriately high expectations of their pupils. Staff promoted achievement effectively, for example through the use of praise and award schemes. School assemblies provided regular opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating pupils' efforts and successes. Staff fostered equality and fairness in their dealings with pupils. They effectively promoted race equality and good citizenship.</p>

Aspect	Comment
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school had established a very positive partnership with parents. Roy Bridge Primary School Parent Group were very supportive and proactive. The school had enjoyed significant success over recent years in involving parents in the life and work of the school. Parents assisted with educational visits, with classwork and the cycling proficiency programme for senior pupils. The school communicated regularly with parents through letters and high quality newsletters. Staff arranged two helpful formal meetings each year with parents to discuss their children's work. Staff provided an informative annual written report for parents on their children's progress. School staff had gathered parents' views on the quality of the school's provision. Adult visitors and community agencies visited the school regularly and made valuable contributions to pupils' learning experiences. There were well established links with local churches. The local minister acted as school chaplain, attended school assemblies and conducted regular services.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Overall, Roy Bridge Primary School provided high quality education for pupils within a very caring and supportive environment. The ethos of the school was a positive feature. Staff were committed and fully engaged in the life of the school. Partnerships with parents and the local community were notable strengths. Pupils were attaining high standards. The school encouraged wider achievement which ensured pupils were keen and motivated learners and were achieving very well in a broad range of areas. There was scope for further improvement in developing consistent approaches to learning and teaching. Improvements in performance across key areas indicated that the school had a strong capacity to build on its current achievements.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. In her six years in post, she had demonstrated a very strong commitment to promoting inclusion for all pupils and raising standards of achievement. She had a clear vision for the school, which she shared with staff and parents and she had identified appropriate priorities for improving programmes, resources and learning and teaching. The school's approaches to self-evaluation were well established. The school's standards and quality report was evaluative and based on a range of evidence, including the views of pupils, parents and staff. The headteacher monitored the work of teachers systematically through reviewing teaching plans, sampling pupils' work and working alongside teachers in classes. She tracked pupils' progress and met regularly with teachers to discuss pupils' achievements. The planned programme of classroom visits had resulted in

improvements in learning and teaching. The headteacher recognised the need to improve the rigour of the school's approaches to monitoring classroom practice. She had not yet ensured, with teachers, that new approaches consistently improved pupils' learning experiences.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- address the accommodation and health and safety issues identified within this report; and
- continue building on existing best practice to achieve a consistently high quality of teaching.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 within two years with parents. HMIE will continue to monitor progress made in relation to accommodation, and have asked the education authority to provide them with a report regarding accommodation, within one year of the publication of this report. Parents will be informed about the progress made by the education authority and the school regarding accommodation issues.

Peter Carpenter
HM Inspector

28 October 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
Improvements in performance	very good

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

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	unsatisfactory
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very 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)	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

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
satisfactory	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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • The school had very positive links with the village community. • Staff showed care and concern for their children. • Parents' evenings were helpful and informative. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve aspects of the accommodation.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained tasks clearly. • School was enjoyable and helped them keep safe and healthy. • Teachers told pupils how they were getting on with their work. • Teachers told pupils when they did well and checked their homework. 	<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, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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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@sps.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.sps.org.uk.

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