

**Dochgarroch Primary School  
by Inverness  
The Highland Council  
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## **1. Background**

Dochgarroch Primary School was inspected in March 2005 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 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, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents.

The school serves the areas of Dochgarroch, Dunain, Lochend and Abriachan. At the time of the inspection the roll was 40, including 12 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

The nursery class was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report.

## **2. Key strengths**

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Teachers' high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour.
- The contribution parents made to the school and to their children's learning.
- Teaching and learning experiences provided to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics.
- The rigorous processes for evaluating the work of the school.
- Leadership of the headteacher and the strong sense of teamwork amongst staff.

## **3. What are the views of parents and carers, 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.

Pupils, parents and carers were happy with almost all aspects of the school. Parents and carers thought that communication was good. They felt included in various aspects of school life and found the information provided by staff about their children's learning useful. They thought the school had a good reputation in the community and that it was well led. Pupils were very proud of their school. They felt that the teachers expected them to work hard and helped them when they had difficulties with their work. A few pupils felt that they were given too much homework. Staff were very positive about all aspects of the

work of the school. They were pleased with the support from parents. All staff felt fully involved in the work of the school. They valued the headteacher's commitment to the school and felt she provided very good leadership.

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

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

The overall quality of the structure and balance of the curriculum across the school was good. The school had recently adopted a new approach to delivering the curriculum in a planned way over three sessions. Staff were aware that this would continue to require monitoring over time to ensure breadth and balance in pupils' learning. Teaching programmes in English language and mathematics were well structured and provided an appropriate framework for staff to plan effective learning experiences for pupils. Additional time given to English language and mathematics was used effectively to raise pupils' attainment. There was a strong emphasis on health promotion. A daily movement programme provided good opportunities for pupils at the infant stages to develop their physical skills and spatial awareness. The Eco School initiative enhanced the environmental studies programme and also provided a context for pupils to use their literacy, research and information and communications technology (ICT) skills. The quality of teaching was consistently of a very high standard. Teachers used the multi-stage age groups within each class to an advantage by providing opportunities across the curriculum for older pupils to work with younger pupils. Pupils were effective in supporting each other in their learning and in their play. Teachers shared the purposes of lessons with pupils. They gave clear explanations and were skilled in their use of questioning. Teachers checked for understanding throughout lessons and responded appropriately by giving individual support or by increasing the pace of learning. Pupils were set regular and appropriate homework.

At all stages, pupils were motivated and worked well with a high degree of independence. They had good relationships with their teachers and were attentive in class. They were involved in setting their own targets for improvement and reviewing their progress. There were several good examples of learning activities that challenged pupils' thinking. Pupils were engaged in self and peer assessment and this was particularly effective in developing their writing skills. They worked well together in pairs, small groups and in whole class situations. Across the school, pupils showed skill in using ICT and made very good use of the Internet to undertake research skills. The school made good use of the local environment and local community including the Abriachan Forest Trust and Dochfour estate.

At all stages, pupils were developing self-confidence and good social skills. They showed respect for others and the school environment. Pupils were actively involved in the Eco committee and the school had achieved green flag status in the national Eco School initiative. The school provided a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop citizenship skills. Older pupils were effective in supporting younger pupils through carrying out additional responsibilities such as 'buddying'. Pupils also undertook specific duties around the school for example, feeding the birds and answering the school telephone. The pupil council allowed pupils to have a say on various aspects of school life, for example, the design and use of the school garden. Pupils in P4-P7 successfully participated in enterprise projects which promoted their skills in cooperative working. Pupils were developing a good awareness of the needs of others through various fund raising activities, the most recent being an auction in aid of the Tsunami Appeal. They showed a good understanding of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise. They benefited from

participating in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including country dancing, athletics, curling and golf.

### **English language**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good. Standards attained in recent years were consistently above national levels. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing, and a number of pupils were working beyond these levels. Pupils not attaining national levels were well supported and making good progress in their coursework. Almost all pupils listened and responded well to their teachers and to each other. They confidently expressed their points of view and were able to build on others' ideas and opinions. Pupils read well for information and used these skills across the curriculum. Most pupils from P3 to P7 read fluently and many read widely for pleasure. Visiting authors had inspired pupils to read further and had also influenced their approach to writing. Pupils described the key features of different types of books correctly and showed a good knowledge about language. At the early stages, pupils were making good progress in developing early literacy skills and some pupils produced good pieces of extended writing. Pupils in P4-P7 wrote at length, in a variety of styles and for an appropriate range of purposes. Standards of handwriting and presentation were consistently good across all stages.

### **Mathematics**

In mathematics, the overall quality of attainment was very good. Although standards varied from year to year, attainment had recently improved. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels. A significant number achieved these standards earlier than might normally be expected. Those not attaining national levels were making good progress in their coursework. At all stages, pupils presented their written work well. Pupils at P1 had made a very good start to developing early mathematical skills. Throughout the school, pupils were developing good skills in information handling and by P7 they could interpret accurately information from a wide range of graphs. At all stages, pupils had made good use of computers to handle and present mathematical information. Most demonstrated confidence in calculating mentally and had also developed good skills in written calculations. By the later stages pupils showed a good understanding of vulgar fractions, percentages and decimals. From the early stages, pupils showed a good understanding of different ways of measuring and recording time. At P4 to P7 pupils had a sound knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes and their properties. Senior pupils were able to work competently and accurately on angles using turtle graphics. They were confident in using problem solving strategies.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

The school had very effective arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. All staff had a strong commitment to ensuring pupils' well-being. They knew pupils and their families well and were sensitive to their needs. Pupils showed very good care and concern for each other. The school had appropriate procedures in place for child protection and dealing with bullying incidents. Effective procedures were in place for the administration of medicines and to ensure safe use of the Internet.

The school had very good arrangements for meeting pupils' needs and for supporting their learning. Teachers gave well focused assistance to individuals and groups of pupils, including those achieving high standards. Regular reviewing of priorities meant that appropriate support was provided for pupils at all stages. Class teachers and support staff, effectively consulted with the support for learning team leader and the school's educational

psychologist to ensure pupils' needs were met appropriately. Pupils with additional support needs were assisted well in class and were actively involved in all areas of the curriculum. They had suitable individualised educational programmes with learning targets clearly specified. Pupils for whom English was an additional language were responding well to the sensitive and creative support provided by staff in consultation with a teacher of English as an additional language.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The quality of the accommodation was fair. Staff worked hard to create a bright and stimulating environment for pupils. Extensive redecoration and new windows had improved the building. The school garden provided rich opportunities for learning and was an attractive feature in the playground. The school did not have a hall or separate dining facilities. The space available limited the choice of activities which impacted on learning and teaching. Whilst staff were creative in adapting classrooms, the environment impacted on aspects of the curriculum, for example activities in physical education and drama requiring space were restricted or did not take place. Whilst suitable arrangements were in place for serving lunches in the classrooms, this was not ideal.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The school was welcoming and friendly. Pupils and staff shared a strong sense of pride in the school. The relationships between and amongst staff and pupils were very positive. Staff had very high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour and pupils responded positively. Pupils' behaviour was exemplary and they showed consideration for each other. Pupils were actively involved in many aspects of school life. There was a strong sense of equality and fairness in the school. The school
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	positively promoted ethnic, cultural and religious diversity through the curriculum and in the daily life of the school. The weekly assembly provided opportunities for religious observance, supported by the local minister who led the assembly once a month. Pupils' achievements in and out of school were celebrated by all.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had very good links with parents, the local community and other local schools. It had a high profile within the community and participated in a range of local initiatives in addition to supporting a number of charities. Parents were encouraged to be fully involved in their child's learning and in supporting the work of the school and they did so effectively. Parents were involved in reviewing the work of the school. Regular newsletters kept everyone informed about school issues. These, plus other information,

	<p>were displayed on the school website. Recent improvements in communication had taken account of parents' views. Parents found their appointments with teachers helpful and appreciated the approachability of staff. They received from teachers good quality reports on pupils' progress. The School Board provided good support and took an active interest in the work of the school. The PTA was also very supportive and raised funds for the school. The community police supported the school in delivering drug education. Parents were consulted appropriately on the content of the drug and health education programmes. Workshops were held in the evening to allow parents to be active partners in developing their children's understanding of sensitive health issues. Staff had developed effective links with educational support services. The school had effective procedures to support pupils entering P1 and pupils transferring to secondary school.</p>
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## 7. Improving the school

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

Dochgarroch Primary School provided a very good quality of education for its pupils. Parents, pupils and staff worked together very effectively to develop strong partnerships within the school and the local community. Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils were very good. The school provided a good curriculum and learning and teaching were very good. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was very good.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. She had a clear strategic vision for the school which she effectively translated into practice. During her two years in post she had successfully promoted a strong sense of teamwork and had displayed a high level of commitment to the school. Her own teaching was a model of good practice. Staff had developed very good relationships with parents and pupils. All had successfully been involved in evaluating the work of the school and had identified positive features and areas to improve. Effective quality assurance procedures, with a clear focus on raising attainment, were in place. Pupils' learning was systematically monitored, including regular sampling of their work, and progress in their learning tracked closely. The headteacher discussed teachers' plans, observed teaching and learning and gave useful feedback to pupils and staff.

### **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:

- review and improve aspects of accommodation; and
- monitor the new timetables over the planned three year cycle to ensure breadth and balance of the curriculum.

### **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 with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents and carers.

Belinda Sheehan  
HM Inspector

7 June 2005

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

### **We judged the following to be good**

- Structure of the curriculum

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- Accommodation and facilities

### **We judged the following to be unsatisfactory**

- No aspects were found to be in this category

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<b>What pleased parents and carers most</b>	<b>What parents and carers would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The energy and leadership of the headteacher.</li> <li>• The wide range of extra curricular activities and the school's participation in out-of-school events.</li> <li>• The level of support for all pupils, and the high expectations set for them.</li> <li>• The use of ICT.</li> <li>• Staff were approachable and made visitors feel welcome in school.</li> <li>• The school had a good reputation in the community strengthened by initiatives such as the Eco Schools' Award.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities for sports and exercise.</li> </ul>
<b>What pleased pupils most</b>	<b>What pupils would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's approach to dealing with bullying.</li> <li>• The good behaviour in the school.</li> <li>• Teachers helped them with their work and told them how to improve.</li> <li>• They enjoyed being at school and felt safe.</li> <li>• Teachers checked their homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils had no major concerns about the school.</li> <li>• A few pupils felt that they had too much homework.</li> </ul>

<b>What pleased staff most</b>	<b>What staff would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leadership of the headteacher.</li> <li>• Opportunities for all staff to be involved in monitoring and developing the work of the school.</li> <li>• The motivated and enthusiastic pupils.</li> <li>• The high staff morale.</li> <li>• Support from parents.</li> <li>• The school's reputation in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff had no matters they wished to see improved.</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).

### **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 Frank Crawford, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG.

### **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 our complaints procedure 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 Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk)

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