

**Lochardil Primary School  
Inverness  
The Highland Council  
1 May 2007**

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## 1. Background

Lochardil Primary School was inspected in January 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 Lochardil and parts of the Drummond and Culduthel areas of Inverness. At the time of the inspection the roll was 292, including 30 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 work of the nursery class was not included in this inspection.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Use of information and communications technology (ICT) to motivate pupils to learn.
- Attainment in English language.
- Pupils' positive behaviour and application to their work and staff commitment to ensuring the care of pupils.
- Pupils' wider achievements within and outwith the school.
- Relationships between senior managers, staff and pupils and the sense of pride permeating the school.

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

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

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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.

Parents were very positive about most aspects of the school. They thought that staff were strongly committed to the care and welfare of their children. They thought that the school dealt effectively with inappropriate pupil behaviour and that it had a good reputation in the local community. A significant minority were unclear about the school's priorities for improving pupils' education. A few were concerned about pupils' toilet facilities in the school. Pupils felt that teachers praised them for doing well and expected them to work as hard as they could. They felt safe and well looked after. Staff were extremely positive about all aspects of school life. They felt that senior managers were very approachable and supportive.

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

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

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. It was broad and balanced. Throughout the school, pupils made effective use of ICT to support their learning in a number of curricular areas, for example, in mathematics and social subjects. Teachers made good use of digital projectors in classes to successfully motivate pupils to learn. Staff were working well towards delivering two hours of quality physical education (PE) each week for all pupils. From P4 to P7, pupils' learning experiences were enriched by the contribution of visiting specialists in PE, art and design, and music. Teachers did not yet ensure that pupils' skills in enterprise education were systematically implemented across the school. The overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers provided clear explanations and used praise well to develop pupils' confidence. They gave pupils good advice on what they needed to do to improve their work, particularly their writing. They questioned pupils carefully to check their understanding but did not always make sufficient use of questioning to extend pupils' learning. Teachers set regular homework, but it was not always sufficiently varied or challenging.

Pupils were enthusiastic and motivated learners. They were well behaved, stayed focused on tasks and worked purposefully through their classwork. They cooperated effectively with others when working in small groups, for example, in drama and PE activities and taking part in mathematical games. They shared ideas particularly well in reading and writing activities. Staff had yet to ensure that pupils experienced sufficient tasks which encouraged them to be active in their learning, including at the early stages through play. Pupils responded well when they were given responsibility for aspects of their own learning such as personal research activities and class talks.

The school took very good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Staff promoted pupils' personal and social development through a range of appropriate activities. Pupils were confident and cooperated well with their peers and with adults. They had recently produced and were successful in selling Christmas cards and CDs. They took part with enthusiasm in school drama productions such as the annual Christmas show and an adapted performance of Macbeth. Senior pupils supported younger pupils when acting as 'buddies'. Pupils responded very well to these opportunities. Staff also recognised and rewarded pupils' achievements beyond the school setting. Pupils enjoyed and gained from a range of out-of-school activities and competitions. These included swimming, gymnastics, football, athletics, basketball, American football and modern dance. Pupils were very positive about these activities and the skills that they were developing as a result. A music club run by the headteacher, offered pupils the opportunity to play in a small group

situation. The pupil council were able to make decisions, such as making cycling to school safer, introducing healthy snacks and nominating the charities the school supported each year.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Over recent years, it had remained consistently high. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national attainment levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Many achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils requiring additional support with their learning were making good progress. Across the school, pupils listened very attentively and responded well to teachers' instructions and explanations. Pupils at the early stages were making very good progress in developing literacy skills. By P4, pupils read competently to gather information and could discuss confidently what they had read. Senior pupils displayed confidence in presenting solo talks. They expressed their views clearly on a range of topics and valued the opinions of others. They read regularly for pleasure and had well-developed reference skills. Throughout the school, pupils wrote well for practical purposes. They produced some stimulating pieces of imaginative writing and used descriptive language well in their writing. Overall, they achieved high standards of punctuation, sentence structure and presentation in their written work.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was good. In the past three years, attainment had steadily improved. Most pupils from P3 to P6 and a majority at P7 achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in key aspects of mathematics. Across the school several pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Most pupils were making good progress in their course work but at most stages there was a need for more consolidation for too many pupils. Pupils were able to organise and interpret information from graphs and use computers effectively to organise and present their own data. Most pupils were able to perform mental and written calculations accurately but there was room for further improvement. Most pupils could identify a range of shapes and describe their properties competently. From P5 to P7, a few pupils were unsure of measuring angles and the diameter of a circle. Pupils' skills in identifying and using an appropriate range of strategies to solve mathematical problems were well developed.

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

Overall, the school's approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs were adequate. There were appropriate arrangements to support the care and learning needs of children transferring from nursery to P1 and P7 to secondary school. Teachers provided some activities for pupils of differing abilities. They did not consistently ensure that tasks and groupings were sufficiently well matched to pupils' individual learning needs, particularly in mathematics. Lessons did not always ensure an appropriate level of reinforcement of learning for a significant minority of pupils, or challenge for a few higher achieving pupils. The school had effective systematic approaches to identify and support pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning. Classroom assistants gave valuable, flexible support with classwork. The visiting support for learning teacher and support staff provided effective assistance in class to pupils with significant additional support needs. Arrangements included clearly stated individualised

educational programmes which set focused learning targets for progress which were shared regularly with pupils and parents.

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

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Staff were very committed to ensuring pupils' care and welfare. They knew their pupils well and were responsive to their personal, social and emotional needs. Staff were familiar with the school's child protection procedures and had received appropriate training. Pupils felt confident in the school's arrangements for dealing with any incidents of bullying and could readily discuss confidential matters with staff. They supported each other well through a valuable 'Help at Hand' initiative to help any pupil needing assistance. The cook and supervising staff successfully encouraged pupils to select and eat healthy options, including the very popular healthy morning snack. Supervision arrangements did not always ensure pupils' safety and protection while they were in the school building and playground which had several entrances.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Overall, the quality of accommodation was weak. The main building was bright and welcoming with stimulating areas for learning including the library, ICT provision in classrooms and the surrounding school grounds. There were no toilet facilities in one of the annexes. Pupils used toilets in the main building which required upgrading. There were important weaknesses in arrangements for ensuring pupils' security and safety in the main building and playground. The school and education authority should take urgent steps to address these important shortcomings. The lack of effective arrangements to ensure safe movement of vehicles in the playing areas was a potential hazard to pupils. Access for disabled users was too limited.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	The school had a positive, welcoming ethos and relationships between staff and pupils were very good. Pupils were very well behaved, friendly and courteous. They demonstrated respect for staff and each other and were proud of their school. Teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attendance which were well met. They now needed to ensure teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment and learning needs were consistently addressed. School assemblies celebrated a range of pupils' successes and provided appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Staff treated pupils fairly and ensured that all pupils were involved in the life of the school. Pupils had a good understanding of religious and cultural diversity.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had an effective partnership with parents. The supportive School Board helped with fundraising events. Parents helped with outings and social events. Teachers effectively used homework diaries to enable parents to comment on their children's learning. Parents received helpful twice yearly written reports on their children's progress. The school did not yet sufficiently involve parents in their children's learning, for example, by providing information on how to support them at home. The school consulted parents appropriately on sensitive health issues such as personal relationships and sexual health. Pupils' involvement in school concerts and fundraising events enhanced the school's reputation in the local community. The school had effective, supportive curriculum links with other associated primary schools and Inverness Royal Academy. Links with the wider community were too limited.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

The school provided good quality education for its pupils within a caring and supportive environment. Teachers and support staff were very successful in encouraging all pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. Overall, pupils were attaining high standards in English language, and making effective progress in using ICT to support their learning. There was scope for further improvement in mathematics.

The headteacher led the school well. He had a clear, strategic vision for the development of the school and took a measured, well planned approach to school improvement. He was highly respected by staff, pupils and parents and promoted

effective staff teamwork. He had ensured classes were well resourced to support pupils' learning, especially in ICT. He had created a detailed, electronic assessment system to enable staff to record and track pupils' progress across the curriculum. The deputy headteacher provided effective support to the headteacher, particularly in ensuring the school ran smoothly and providing guidance to newly qualified teachers. She fulfilled her duties well but her remit was not sufficiently focused in supporting pupils' learning. The principal teacher fulfilled her remit enthusiastically and conscientiously. She provided effective support and advice to staff. The headteacher had not yet ensured that her curriculum management skills were clearly focused on whole school improvement. The school had effective approaches to monitor and evaluate the quality of its work. Senior managers monitored and evaluated learning and teaching well using a good range of procedures. These included providing teachers with helpful oral and written feedback on their plans, sampling pupils' work and making formal visits to classes. The headteacher needed to refine these procedures to ensure that they had more impact on improving the quality of learning and teaching. The school had the clear capacity to ensure ongoing improvement. Working together, the headteacher and staff are well placed to further improve the work of the school.

### **Main points for action**

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

- improve arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs to further improve pupils' attainment, particularly in mathematics;
- address the accommodation issues as outlined in this report and in particular the safety issues presented by the lack of appropriate traffic management in the playground, and building security arrangements; and
- continue to develop monitoring and evaluating procedures with a focus on improving learning and teaching.

### **What happens next?**

Within six months of the publication of this report, HM Inspectors will seek a report from the education authority indicating how the safety issues highlighted in the above main point for action have been addressed.

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.

June Graham  
HM Inspector

1 May 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	good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very 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	good
Accommodation and facilities	weak
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
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	good
Leadership across the school	good
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
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>• There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils and children were treated fairly.</li> <li>• The school dealt effectively with inappropriate behaviour.</li> <li>• The school had a good reputation in the local community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more information about the school's priorities for improving pupils' education.</li> <li>• Improve toilet facilities and the playground.</li> <li>• Organise more school performances and after school activities.</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 praised them for doing well and expected them to work as hard as they could.</li> <li>• They felt safe and well looked after.</li> <li>• Teachers checked their homework.</li> <li>• Teachers explained things clearly and were good at letting them know how to improve their work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the behaviour of a few pupils.</li> <li>• Give pupils more say in how to make things better.</li> <li>• Treat all pupils fairly.</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>• All staff like working in the school.</li> <li>• Senior managers were very approachable and supportive.</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 Acting 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).

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If you have a concern about this report, you should contact our Complaints Manager by telephoning 01506 600258/9 or write to Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also email [HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk). A copy of the HMIE Feedback and Complaints leaflet is available from this office by telephoning the above telephone number 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, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: [ask@sps.org.uk](mailto:ask@sps.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.sps.org.uk](http://www.sps.org.uk).

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