

**Glenurquhart Primary School
Drumnadrochit
The Highland Council
28 October 2008**

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1. Background

Glenurquhart 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 the Parent Council and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the village of Drumnadrochit and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 143. 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. The headteacher had been in post for ten months at the time of the inspection.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Well behaved and cooperative pupils.
- Productive partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- Effective transition arrangements from the nursery to P1 and from P7 to secondary school.
- The promotion of pupils' wider achievements.
- The commitment of the headteacher and staff in providing a high quality of care for pupils.

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.

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 and pupils were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. All parents felt that staff made them feel welcome in the school and that there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Parents felt that their children were fairly treated by the school and that the school was well led. Almost all parents felt that the school had a good reputation in the local community. Almost all pupils enjoyed being at school and felt safe and well looked after. They felt their teachers explained things clearly and told them when they had done something well. Pupils enjoyed the wide range of activities available after school. Staff were satisfied with all aspects of the school. They felt that communication between staff was effective and that the headteacher was supportive and valued their contributions.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. It provided pupils with a suitably broad and balanced range of activities. Staff had developed appropriate programmes of work for most areas of the curriculum. A residential trip for pupils at P7 provided good opportunities for pupils to build confidence and learn new skills through a wide range of activities. Pupils at all stages developed enterprise skills through well chosen activities. The school had made effective progress in providing almost all pupils with an appropriate weekly amount of high quality physical education. Staff had developed good curricular links with Glenurquhart High School in a wide range of subjects. Across the stages, staff did not systematically develop pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT). Overall, the quality of teaching was good. There were some examples of very good teaching which encouraged pupils to think for themselves. Teachers gave clear explanations and instructions and used praise well to motivate pupils. Most teachers effectively shared the purpose of their lessons with pupils and made sound use of questions to check pupils' understanding. Teachers did not consistently review learning and did not always use questions to develop pupils' understanding.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was satisfactory overall. Most pupils were motivated and cooperated with their teacher in their learning activities. Pupils interacted positively with each other in pairs and small groups and responded well to praise and feedback. Across the stages, pupils behaved responsibly and worked well without direct supervision. Pupils had a general awareness of the progress they were making but did not always know what they had to do to improve. They did not have sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their learning or to review their own progress. Homework tasks were issued regularly but on occasion lacked variety and challenge.

Improvements in performance

Over the last three years, the school had improved its performance in a number of important areas. These improvements had not all continued into the current year. Overall, improvements in performance were satisfactory.

In English language, pupils achieved satisfactory standards in reading and writing. Improvements in reading and writing over the last three years had not been maintained in the current year. The majority of pupils achieved appropriate national levels in reading and writing. A few pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected but this early progress was not maintained. Pupils requiring specific support in aspects of English language were making appropriate progress. The school did not systematically record pupils' progress in talking and listening. In most classes pupils listened carefully to teachers' instructions and explanations. Pupils were developing effective skills in talking in structured groups but the majority had not yet developed these skills in less structured situations. In the early years, pupils had developed a range of appropriate skills in reading. At the upper stages, a few pupils did not read fluently. With support, the majority of pupils were able to answer questions about the events, characters and choice of language in a text. At all stages, pupils were making sound progress in developing their knowledge of language. A majority of pupils talked enthusiastically about a range of authors. Across the school, pupils wrote well for a range of purposes. Pupils in the upper stages, however, were not sufficiently skilled at note taking. The standard of pupils' spelling and presentation was too variable.

In mathematics, pupils achieved satisfactory standards. The majority of pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment. At the early stages, most pupils reached these levels earlier than might normally be expected. There had been an improvement in attainment over a three year period but this had not been maintained in the current year. Pupils who were not achieving national levels were making suitable progress in their learning. Across the school, pupils were confident in interpreting and drawing an appropriate range of graphs. Pupils in P4/5 had successfully conducted a survey to collect information on healthy activities and effectively presented their findings in graph form. Across the stages, pupils' skills in using ICT to organise information in spreadsheets and databases were not well developed. At the early stages, pupils were developing sound skills in adding and subtracting. By P7, most pupils were confident in mental and written number work but were less accurate in using and converting between units of measurement. At all stages, pupils had an appropriate knowledge of angles and the properties of shapes. Pupils at P1 demonstrated an early understanding of symmetry in their artwork. Across the stages, pupils lacked confidence in solving mathematical problems systematically.

Pupils at P1 were successfully developing an appropriate knowledge of their bodies in health education. In technology lessons, pupils in P3/4 had learned about important aspects of wool production and could explain in detail some of the processes involved. In P4/5, pupils were developing a good understanding of world religions. Pupils at P5/6 demonstrated good levels of fitness and agility and were improving their batting and fielding skills in cricket. Pupils in the upper stages had successfully learned in art classes about Charles Rennie Mackintosh and could produce their own designs in a similar style.

The school took very good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Pupils were given a wide range of opportunities to develop skills involved in responsible citizenship. Pupils from every class participated in the pupil council which had recently successfully planned the development of a reading garden in the playground. Pupils in P7 exercised responsibility for younger pupils by serving as buddies for pupils in P1. Pupils in P4/5 encouraged pupils in P2 with their learning in class during 'Share Time'. Pupils had

developed skills of teamwork and stayed healthy by participating in a wide range of well attended after school clubs, including keep-fit, shinty and football. The Active Schools Coordinator, supported by parents and staff, successfully encouraged pupils to compete in various sporting events and competitions. A few pupils from P5-7 were making good progress in learning to play a musical instrument. Across the stages, pupils were developing an awareness of enterprise skills. Pupils in P4/5 had successfully raised money for charity by performing and recording a CD of traditional Scottish and Gaelic songs. At all stages, pupils developed confidence in performing at a wide range of organised concerts and shows which were enjoyed by the local community. Pupils at the middle stages had contributed effectively to the community by organising a well attended show linked to their topic work on the Victorians. Pupils showed their concern for others by successfully raising money for local and national charities.

The current school improvement plan had been written prior to the current headteacher taking up her post. The school had made limited progress in overtaking the priorities in the improvement plan. Staff felt that pupils, particularly boys, were now more enthusiastic readers. All staff had been involved in sharing good practice in learning and teaching through discussions. Targets to raise pupils' attainment in reading had not yet been met. The school's progress in planning a mathematics programme for pupils in P7 had not made a positive impact on pupils' learning or attainment.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's approaches to meeting learners' needs were satisfactory. Teachers matched most tasks and activities well to the needs of learners, particularly at the early and middle stages. The pace of learning was too slow in the middle and upper stages. For some learners, particularly higher achieving pupils in the upper school, learning activities offered insufficient challenge. The school had appropriate procedures in place to identify pupils who required additional support with their learning. Pupils were given effective support by learning support staff and the classroom assistant. Partner agencies, such as speech and language therapists, provided valuable assistance in meeting the individual needs of a few pupils. The learning targets for the few pupils with individualised educational programmes were not always sufficiently focused on learners' needs. The progress of individual learners was not reviewed systematically.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school had very good arrangements in place for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. These included effective procedures for the safe use of the Internet and action against bullying. All staff had received appropriate child protection training and knew what to do if they had concerns about a child's welfare. Pupils felt safe and well looked after in school and were confident they could discuss sensitive issues with staff. The school had appropriate procedures in place regarding the safe storage and administration of medicines. The school positively promoted healthy lifestyles through the curriculum, a wide range of after-school activities and an outdoor residential experience. The school had developed very good procedures to support children moving from the nursery into P1 and from P7 to Glenurquhart High School.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The overall management and use of resources for learning were satisfactory. The school buildings provided suitable access for users or visitors with restricted mobility and were mostly well maintained. Security arrangements were appropriate. Most teaching areas were of a suitable size, particularly those in the recently built extension. The early stages areas were in a poor state of decoration and did not provide sufficient space for active learning. Classrooms were not sufficiently well equipped for ICT. The hall was well used for Physical Education and drama, and as a dining area. The school had good outdoor play areas and shared use of an all-weather pitch. Pupils in the early stages did not have good access to all play areas. Staff had recently begun to review arrangements for the organisation of resources and space but this had not yet led to significant improvement.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>Staff and pupils identified very positively with the school and felt able to contribute ideas and suggestions for improvement. Almost all pupils were very well behaved and polite. They behaved responsibly in class and in the playground and interacted well together. Staff treated pupils fairly and had high expectations for pupils' attendance and behaviour. Relationships between teachers and pupils were very good. The school very successfully celebrated pupils' achievements in school and the community at assemblies, in newsletters and in displays of work around the school. There were regular assemblies for religious observance. Pupils effectively learned about major world religions in religious and moral education lessons. The school did not provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of other cultures.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>The school was very successful in involving parents and families in its work. Monthly newsletters provided parents with helpful information about the school. Individual class newsletters issued by a few teachers gave parents useful information relevant to the work of that class. Parents felt that parents' evenings were informative and also appreciated some informal opportunities to meet with staff. They felt welcome in the school. Parents valued the information provided in written reports about the progress of their children. Parents were effectively informed about sensitive aspects of the school's health education programme. The school had successfully involved parents in a wide range of activities. Parents had volunteered to accompany school trips and helped in a wide range of ways in the school. They had made a significant contribution to the school's programme of after-school sports activities. The active parent council had very successfully worked with staff to organise a fete.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Glenurquhart Primary School provided a very welcoming and caring environment. Very productive partnerships with parents and the wider community enriched pupils' learning experiences. Pupils were polite and well behaved towards staff, visitors and each other. Staff worked well together and were committed to the school. Standards of attainment in English language and mathematics were satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching was good and teachers provided pupils with clear explanations. Most

pupils were motivated learners and worked well together. Good quality teaching was not maintained consistently across all classes. Pupils had too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

The headteacher had been in post for almost a year. She was strongly committed to the school and had already won the support and confidence of parents, pupils and staff. She had worked effectively to establish good relationships with parents and to provide a safe and positive ethos in the school. Staff appreciated the support and advice provided by the headteacher and felt consulted and valued. She had successfully encouraged staff to suggest improvements and to show initiative. The headteacher now recognised the need to raise pupils' attainment and to improve the school's procedures for self-evaluating all aspects of the school's work. On a few occasions, the school had successfully sought the views of parents and staff. The headteacher had monitored teachers' plans, observed lessons and provided teachers with helpful feedback. This had not yet led to improvements in the consistency of teaching across the school. School staff did not systematically monitor pupils' attainment to ensure appropriate pace and challenge. With the continued support of all staff and from the authority the school had the capacity to improve.

Main points for action

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

- raise attainment in English language and mathematics;
- continue to improve arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress and learning experiences to ensure greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching;
- improve arrangements to meet the learning needs of all pupils; and
- provide more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning.

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.

Alistair Brown
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	satisfactory
Improvements in performance	satisfactory

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

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	satisfactory
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very 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	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
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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents were very positive about almost all aspects of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few parents would like the school to provide more information about its priorities for improvement and about the standard of work staff expected from pupils.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils were very positive about almost all aspects of the school.	<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 positive about 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, 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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