

**Port Charlotte Primary School
Islay
Argyll and Bute Council
28 September 2004**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils supported?	3
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Improving the school	5
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	7
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	8
How can you contact us?	9

1. Background

Port Charlotte Primary School was inspected in May 2004 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 and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents and staff, and to P4 to P7 pupils. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson and all members of the School Board, the school chaplain and members of the local community. There was no parent teacher association, but the School Board successfully undertook this role.

The school serves the village of Port Charlotte and the rural and fishing communities on the western shores of Lochindaal on the island of Islay. At the time of the inspection the roll was 51. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Hard working and caring staff team who had created a welcoming ethos.
- The contribution of the area network support teacher.
- The quality of care and support for pupils with additional support needs.
- The commitment of staff and parents to the school.

3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff

Parents and carers were satisfied with a number of aspects of the school. Most thought that their child enjoyed school and was treated fairly. They appreciated the care and concern shown to the pupils by staff. In written comment, and later in discussion, they expressed concern about the staffing issues in the school. All pupils thought they were helped to feel safe and healthy, and that they had a say in how to improve the school. Most thought that all pupils were treated fairly and that the behaviour of pupils was good. However, in discussions with pupils during the inspection some commented about bullying at playtimes which, they felt, was not dealt with firmly enough. Teaching staff were positive about all aspects of school life. Support staff wanted

better communication amongst staff. All staff were appreciative of the acting headteacher's open and approachable style of management.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Staff provided a broad curriculum for all pupils. They used the flexibility allocation to increase the amount of time given to each curriculum area. Following a dip in attainment in 2003, there had been improvements in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Curriculum programmes relied too heavily on commercial resources. Staff had begun to address personal and social development, the Eco-Schools programme, enterprise education and science. In P6/7, pupils were learning French and at P3/4/5 pupils learned Gaelic. Pupils at all stages had access to hardware for information and communications technology (ICT). However, they needed more regular access and better opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning and to develop skills in ICT. In health education, all pupils were aware of the need for a healthy and active lifestyle. Healthy school lunches were eaten with great enjoyment.

Overall, the quality of teaching was fair. There were some examples of very good and innovative teaching, notably at P1/2. While teachers who shared classes communicated well with one another, their expectations varied. All teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils. They gave clear instructions and some used questioning well. Teachers did not always ensure that the pace of lessons and choice of activities provided sufficient challenge or support to meet the needs of all pupils. Most pupils worked quietly when directed by staff. However, there were too few occasions for pupils to engage actively in their learning, to be creative, to think for themselves or collaborate in small groups. Pupils were not motivated or enthusiastic learners. Homework did not provide a sufficiently well balanced range of cross-curricular activities.

Pupils in P6/7 acted as buddies for pupils in P1/2. There was scope to enhance this worthwhile initiative further. There was no pupil council but pupils felt they were able to influence the work of the school through discussion at assemblies. There were too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for aspects of the life and work of the school. The successful gardening club provided attractive tubs for the village. The school participated in biennial, residential visits to France and Loch Eil.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was fair. Pupils in P1/2 were improving their literacy skills. The majority of pupils from P3 to P7 were attaining in line with national standards in reading, talking and listening. Less than half were attaining these standards in writing. Levels of attainment fluctuated from year to year. Most pupils listened passively during lessons. They had too few opportunities to take part in suitably challenging group activities. Only the youngest pupils talked enthusiastically about the books they had read. Across the school, textbooks were the main teaching resource. The range of activities lacked

stimulation, variety and challenge. Pupils' skills in finding and using information from a range of sources were not well developed. Pupils' skills in writing were limited. Most needed to write more often and improve their understanding of how to craft a story, and use language more effectively to create meaning and effects. The standard of pupils' spelling and handwriting was variable.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was unsatisfactory. Pupils in P1/2 were making steady progress with their early numeracy skills. Less than half the pupils from P3 to P7 were attaining appropriate national levels in mathematics. At all stages pupils had too few opportunities to display and interpret information, particularly using ICT. In number, money and measurement most pupils were unable to carry out mental calculations accurately or with quick recall. Pupils' number skills were not well developed. Pupils lacked skills in using materials in practical situations. In shape, position and movement most children in P4 were able to identify the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils were not able to use a range of problem solving strategies effectively.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The quality of pastoral care was good. Staff knew their pupils well and placed a high priority on their care and welfare. They had worked hard over the last two years to improve behaviour and encourage pupils' personal and social development. Pupils, in the main, were confident in classrooms and in the playground. Playground supervision was variable. Staff were aware of child protection procedures and of the school's procedures for dealing with any incidents of bullying. Suitable arrangements were in place to help pupils make the transition between the nursery and P1, and from P7 to secondary school.

The arrangements to assist pupils with additional support needs were good. The area network support teacher provided very good guidance for staff and pupils. She prepared, and helped to implement and review, individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for a number of pupils. These were appropriate and assisted support staff in the preparation of their pupils' daily programmes. Increasingly, the responsibility for planning and implementing IEPs should transfer to teachers. Records of Needs were managed well. Pupils with additional support needs were integrated appropriately into classrooms and were supported well by visiting specialists, including a speech and language therapist, a physiotherapist and an educational psychologist. There was scope to improve the links between and among agencies, staff and parents. Pupils receiving additional help with their learning were making steady progress. Special needs assistants were caring and very supportive of their pupils.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. The school building was clean and well maintained. New windows had been installed recently. Space in the open plan teaching area used by P3 to P7 was not used to best advantage. Display areas and storage space were limited. There was suitable access and toilet facilities for the disabled were being improved. Office accommodation was adequate. Pupils had access to hard surfaced playgrounds and a grassed play space. There was a quiet, secluded area and a large plot where pupils grew vegetables. The building's security system was used appropriately, but part of the perimeter fence was damaged.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The acting headteacher had created a welcoming atmosphere. Staff were open and friendly, and committed to the school. Relationships between staff and pupils were variable. Staff were keen to improve the school's relationship with parents. They were anxious about future staffing arrangements and their morale was low. Teachers fostered equality and fairness in classes. They were working to develop positive attitudes to learning, and to improve behaviour. They used praise appropriately to motivate pupils and to encourage effort. School and classroom awards were used well and pupils' achievements were celebrated at weekly assemblies. Religious observance was a feature of these assemblies. Teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour but there were inconsistencies in their expectations of the quality of pupils' learning.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Partnership with parents and the community were in need of further development. Parents welcomed the range of improvements brought about by the acting headteacher and staff during the last year. However, they were concerned about their children's attainment. The School Board was supportive of the school and was involved in a number of fundraising events. Parents received an annual report about their child's progress. They were given very little advice about how to help their children with homework or about the curriculum followed by them. Overall, they would welcome better communication by the school and more consultation about important matters affecting their children. The school handbook provided a range of helpful information about the school. Staff needed to provide a wider range of information for parents to keep them up-to-date with school and classroom activities. The school chaplain was a welcome visitor who made a positive contribution to the life of the school.</p>

7. Improving the school

At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent on sick leave. After the acting headteacher's appointment, the education authority had undertaken a whole school audit. An extensive action plan based on this audit, and comprising a number of major tasks, was prepared. The acting headteacher had a teaching commitment and was also responsible for the management of a pre-school unit based in a separate centre. Staff turnover and absence continued to be high.

The acting headteacher, with the support principally of part-time staff, and in line with the education authority's action plan had introduced a number of key curriculum initiatives. However, considerable work was still required to ensure improvements in learning, teaching and attainment. The education authority had provided guidance and practical support, and recognised that aspects of morale still needed to be improved. Parents welcomed the recent improvements in the school's ethos but were aware that a range of issues had still to be addressed.

The acting headteacher monitored forward plans and was aware of the strengths and development needs of her staff. She knew the pupils well. Staff were not yet confident in using the education authority's system for monitoring pupils' progress. The acting headteacher was welcomed as caring, open and hard working, and staff, pupils and parents recognised and appreciated her commitment to the school.

In order to effect change and improvement, education authority officers need to continue to work in close partnership with this school to improve the curriculum, learning and teaching, the school's arrangements for quality assurance, and aspects of communication.

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- pupils' attainment;
- the structure and quality of the curriculum;
- the quality of learning and teaching;
- the arrangements for promoting achievement and improving behaviour;
- procedures for monitoring and evaluation;
- the staffing issues raised in this report; and
- aspects of the accommodation as indicated in the report.

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Christine Roebuck
HM Inspector

28 September 2004

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- No aspects were found to be in this category

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- Pastoral care
- Accommodation and facilities
- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness

We judged the following to be fair

- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership

We judged the following to be unsatisfactory

- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Self-evaluation

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

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

<p>What pleased parents and carers most</p>	<p>What parents and carers would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child enjoyed school. • There was mutual respect between pupils and staff. • They were made to feel welcome. • Their child was treated fairly. • Staff showed a concern for their child's care and welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their child's strengths and weaknesses and about their progress. • Information about the standards expected in the school. • The school's reputation in the community. • Closer involvement when decisions are made about their child. • Information given to them about the priorities for improving their children's education.
<p>What pleased pupils most</p>	<p>What pupils would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly. • Teachers told them when they had done something well • They felt safe and well looked after. • They were helped to keep safe and healthy. • Teachers checked their homework. • They had a say in how to make things better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way instances of bullying are dealt with. • What they are told about how they are getting on with their work. • A broader range of homework.
<p>What pleased staff most</p>	<p>What staff would like to see improved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were satisfied with almost all aspects of school life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers wanted improvements in the staffing situation. • Support staff would welcome better communication with them.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Community Services, 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, Unit 7, Ground Floor, Blair Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank, G81 2LA or by telephoning 0141 435 3550. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Professor Alice Brown
The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

Telephone number: 0870 011 5378
e-mail: enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk

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

Crown Copyright 2004

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.