

**Aldourie Primary School
The Highland Council
24 October 2006**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	2
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils supported?	4
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

Aldourie Primary School was inspected in May 2006 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 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 villages of Aldourie and Dores including Scaniport. At the time of the inspection the roll was 34. 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.

- The positive ethos.
- Leadership of the headteacher.
- Enthusiastic, polite and courteous pupils.
- High standards of attainment.
- A committed staff and their effective teamwork.
- The wide range of stimulating and challenging learning experiences for pupils.

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

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.

Overall, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the school. All parents felt that the school was well led. They thought that their children found school work stimulating and challenging and that staff set high standards of attainment. Parents thought staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. They liked the opportunities for their children to participate in a range of fieldtrips. Parents were appreciative of the support that staff provided for pupils. They held the headteacher in high esteem. Almost all pupils were very satisfied with the school. They enjoyed learning and said that they supported one another well. Almost all pupils thought that pupils' behaviour was good. Staff also expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. They all rated the school's work highly. However, parents, staff and pupils felt the accommodation was in need of improvements.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school's curriculum provided broad, balanced and varied experiences for pupils. Teachers made effective use of additional time allocated to mathematics, reading and writing to develop pupils' skills. Policies for mathematics and English language provided very good support to staff. The curriculum for social subjects included an appropriate focus on the local environment. There was an appropriate emphasis on health promotion and pupils were actively encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used effectively across the curriculum. Pupils at P4-P7 were learning French effectively. The expressive arts curriculum was supported well by visiting specialist teachers. There was now a need to focus on developing the school's policy for pupils' personal and social development to reflect the school's good practice and ensure continuity in learning across classes. The overall quality of teaching was very good. Teachers set high expectations for the pupils. They used praise effectively and gave clear explanations and instructions. They selected appropriate resources and took very good account of pupils' prior learning. Teachers shared with pupils the aims of their classwork and the criteria by which it was assessed. They provided them with focused feedback and clear targets for improving their work. Teachers provided varied homework activities to support pupils' learning.

The quality of pupils' learning was very good. Overall, pupils worked effectively in groups across the curriculum. For example, at P4 to P7 pupils cooperated well in small groups to create a sequence of modern dances. In many lessons, pupils were skilled in working independently in groups and individually without the need for teacher support. They were actively engaged in their learning and carried out challenging and stimulating tasks with enthusiasm. Staff used ICT effectively to support pupils' learning. For example, P1 to P3 pupils practised literacy and numeracy skills using the

computers. The P4 to P7 pupils regularly used the Internet to research topics of interest.

The pupil council provided regular opportunities for pupils to have a positive influence on the life of the school. Pupils developed their physical fitness through a range of activities during a health promotion event. They had become more aware of the importance of healthy eating, exercise and dental hygiene. Pupils achieved success in enterprise challenges and learned skills in money management. They brought credit to themselves and their school by winning the area Murray Shield for athletics. They had developed good skills in playing tuned percussion instruments together. Pupils at P4 to P7 were learning about city life and the historical features of Edinburgh in preparation for a residential excursion there. They also developed skills in skiing through visits to the Lecht. Working with a local author and artist the P6 and P7 pupils had written and had published a book of medieval stories.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was very good. In recent years, almost all pupils had attained appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. A significant number had exceeded these levels. By P7 all pupils had attained well beyond the relevant national levels. Attainment had been sustained at a high level over several years. Across all stages, pupils had made very good progress in their coursework. Almost all of them listened attentively, responded well to teachers' questioning and were good at following instructions. They talked clearly about their feelings and expressed their opinions about texts they had read. Most pupils read widely for enjoyment and showed good understanding of writers' ideas. By P3, pupils read aloud confidently with fluency and with expression. Across all stages, pupils wrote very well for a wide range of purposes and audiences. At P7, pupils wrote well crafted play scripts about the life of Mary Queen of Scots. Those at P4 to P7 were skilled in note-taking when researching topics.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good. Levels of attainment had remained consistently high in recent years. Almost all pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. Since the beginning of the session, almost all pupils had made very good progress in their coursework. Across all stages, pupils had appropriate skills in collecting and organising information to create graphs, tables and diagrams. Pupils at the upper stages were skilled in creating databases, graphs and spreadsheets on computers. Across the school, pupils performed mental calculations quickly and accurately. At P1 to P3, they demonstrated good counting skills and solved written addition tasks well. Pupils had a good understanding of shape. Those at P6 and P7 had successfully investigated the properties of a circle. At P4 to P7, pupils had a very good knowledge of mathematics, including a wide range of problem solving strategies.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Standards of care and welfare in the school were high. Staff provided a very good level of pastoral care. They worked effectively together to provide very good support for pupils' social and emotional well-being. Teachers used a range of strategies to motivate pupils and reward positive behaviour, including the use of 'Golden Time' during which they could choose their preferred activity. The school's procedures for dealing with child protection issues and for managing incidents of bullying and racism were appropriate and understood by staff. Pupils felt they were treated fairly and that they could talk to any member of staff if they had a problem. They cared for and supported one another well.

The school's approaches for supporting pupils' learning were very good. Teachers were aware of the range of their pupils' needs and selected tasks and activities that met their needs effectively. The headteacher consulted effectively with parents to develop individualised educational programmes for children with additional support needs. Identified learning targets were well focused on pupils' individual needs. Other agencies had yet to be sufficiently responsive in providing additional advice to support the school's planning for those pupils with additional support needs. Support staff worked well together to provide effective assistance to pupils. The school had very good arrangements in place to support all pupils at points of transfer from pre-school into P1 and from P7 into secondary.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	Overall, the quality of accommodation was unsatisfactory. The main building was bright and welcoming. Staff had created stimulating areas for learning, for example, the library and classrooms. However, the lack of space in the main building limited opportunities for younger pupils to learn through play. The toilet facilities located in the annexe were inadequate. A risk assessment of the campus should be undertaken to improve security and health and safety issues related to the school's close proximity to the road. There were significant concerns about pupils' safety. Insufficient traffic calming measures were in place to warn oncoming drivers that pupils were moving to and from school. Some adaptations had been made to improve facilities for those with mobility difficulties. There was no ramp access to the school annexe.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Pupils, staff, parents and the community were very proud of the school and identified strongly with it. Relationships throughout the school were very good and staff and pupil morale was high. Overall, staff used praise effectively to motivate pupils. They used positive approaches to manage behaviour and overall, pupils' behaviour was very good. Staff set high standards of achievement and behaviour. Teachers organised regular assemblies that provided opportunities for religious observance and celebration of achievement. The school had strong inclusive values that were upheld by staff and pupils. Staff had made a good start to developing citizenship and recognised the need to formalise approaches to promoting race equality more consistently across all stages.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school's partnership with parents and the local community was very good. The school used a wide range of communications with parents, including helpful newsletters, leaflets and a detailed handbook. Teachers produced helpful written progress reports for parents each year. They encouraged parents to be partners in supporting children's learning through their involvement in developing the policy for homework. The school provided appropriate information to parents about sensitive aspects of health and responsible relationships. Parents attended school meals as part of the healthy eating campaign. The local minister made supportive visits to the school. Pupils took pride in their school environment and had begun cultivating flower beds. The School Board were supportive of the school and had helped to develop useful links with local businesses. Very effective links were established with local schools, including a joint enterprise project.

7. Improving the school

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

The quality of education at Aldourie Primary School was of a very good standard. Staff supported children well and provided a high level of pastoral care. Pupils' levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics were high. The quality of learning and teaching observed in almost all lessons was very good. Teachers were developing approaches which took account of pupils' self-evaluation to provide challenging and stimulating learning experiences. Effective use was made of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. Pupils had positive attitudes and made significant contributions to the life of the school. The school's capacity to continue improving was high. The education authority recognised the need to upgrade the standard of accommodation.

The headteacher was an effective manager and very good leader who had earned the respect of pupils, parents and staff. She had established teamwork amongst staff. She had highly-developed interpersonal skills and had consulted and involved staff effectively in addressing a range of priorities. She gave high importance to support for pupils and their families to ensure that all pupils' needs were met effectively. The headteacher was hardworking and committed. Her teaching was a model of very good practice. She had a clear vision for the school's future including how she planned to improve the curriculum for social subjects in line with *A Curriculum for Excellence*. A systematic range of approaches for monitoring and evaluating the school's work including tracking of pupils' progress was in place. The headteacher valued the views of parents and consulted them formally and informally on aspects of the school's work. She recognised the need to improve the rigour of the school's approaches to self-evaluation to ensure the high standards of attainment and quality of learning and teaching were sustained.

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 issues as outlined in this report and in particular the safety issues presented by the lack of suitable traffic management; and
- improve the rigour of the school's approaches to self-evaluation.

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.

Susan Gow
HM Inspector

24 October 2006

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?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	very good

How well are pupils supported?	
Pastoral care	very good
Meeting pupils' needs	very good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Accommodation and facilities	unsatisfactory
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	very good

Improving the school	
Leadership	very good
Self-evaluation	adequate

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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall, parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the school's educational provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents felt the school accommodation was in need of improvements.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall, pupils expressed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of their educational experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils would like the toilets to be part of the main building.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff held the work of the headteacher, themselves and the school community in high regard. They were very satisfied with all aspects of the school's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff felt the accommodation was in need of improvements.

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.

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 Chris McIlroy, Acting HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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.

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

Crown Copyright 2006

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.