

**Canna Primary School
The Highland Council**

3 September 2002

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Canna Primary School The Highland Council

1. Introduction

Canna Primary School was inspected in May 2002 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 how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, mathematics and social subjects.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents. A member of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and parents of all children attending the school.

2. The school

The school serves the islands of Canna and Sanday in the Small Isles. At the time of the inspection the roll was four, including one child in the nursery.

Parents' views

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very satisfied with the work of the school.

All thought that:

- the school was well led;
- their children enjoyed being at school;
- their children were treated fairly and were well looked after; and
- pupils were appropriately challenged in their work.

Ethos

The school's ethos was very good. The headteacher was very committed to the school and had set very high standards of behaviour and performance. Pupils took a great pride in the school and were very courteous. They had good opportunities to develop responsibility. There were appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Attendance was above national levels.

School and community

The headteacher had established very good links with parents, other schools in the Small Isles and on the mainland, and the wider community. Although the headteacher had worked hard to develop links with the educational and property support services, liaison was not always as effective as it could be.

- The school had taken very good steps to involve parents fully in its work.
- The School Board and the whole community supported the school very well.
- Parents received regular helpful information about the curriculum and other activities in the school.
- The school gave very good advice on how parents could assist with their children's education.

- Parents were provided with detailed reports on their children's progress.

Accommodation

Accommodation was generally good. The school had recently been refurbished and the learning environment was enhanced through attractive displays of pupils' work. However, there were still some deficiencies. There was no provision of indoor facilities for physical education in the school or anywhere on the island. The school did not have a secure entry system.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed. Visiting teachers and ancillary staff made a very valuable contribution to the life of the school, as did others who offered their services.

The provision of resources was very good. There was a well-stocked library with very good reference material. The headteacher managed the budget very effectively to support the school's priorities for development.

3. How well are pupils performing?

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. All pupils performed very well in coursework. They read frequently for enjoyment and talked with confidence to one another and to adults. Their skills in reading aloud with expression and in listening for information were very good. All produced very high quality extended writing. Handwriting and spelling were very good. Pupils were achieving and often exceeding national levels of attainment in *listening, talking, reading and writing*.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was generally very good. Pupils performed very well in their appropriately challenging classwork. Skills in mental calculation were very well developed. Pupils effectively

interpreted information from graphs and could construct them very well. They used computers effectively to collect and display information. Although pupils had experience of *problem solving and enquiry*, they needed further opportunities to develop strategies in a more systematic way. At all stages pupils reached appropriate levels of achievement in *information handling, number, money and measurement* and *shape position and movement*. In some aspects they exceeded these levels.

Social subjects

The overall quality of attainment in the social subjects was very good. Pupils coped very well with their coursework. All had very good recall of the topics which they had studied. In history, older pupils were beginning to be aware of change over time. They were very conscious of the social effects of the second world war, and understood the disturbances to family life. Their knowledge of local geography was very good. All had an extensive knowledge of the natural features of Canna. They recalled accurately their work on the geography of Australia, and could talk about climate differences between Australia and Scotland. Their understanding of the main features of weather systems was very sound. In people and society, pupils had a good appreciation of democratic rights and responsibilities. All had a well-developed awareness of economic conditions in the deprived areas of the world.

4. How good is the curriculum?

The curriculum covered all key aspects of learning and was good overall. Pupils were learning French. A lack of facilities limited the development of skills in physical education.

English language

The programme for English language was very good. It gave very good attention to listening, talking, reading and writing. The promotion of reading was a particular strength.

Mathematics

Overall the programme for mathematics was good. It gave very good attention to the development of number and mental arithmetic. Pupils needed more opportunities to develop strategies for problem solving.

Social subjects

The overall programme for social subjects was very good. Very good attention was given to geography and to the Scottish dimension.

Environmental studies

The school had a good programme for environmental studies which included appropriate representation of social subjects and science. Aspects of technology were also included but there was not always progressive development in pupils' learning from stage to stage.

5. How good is learning and teaching?

The overall quality of learning and teaching was very good. All of the lessons seen were good or very good. Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

- Planning was good overall but would benefit from being more detailed.
- There was a very good mix of effective direct teaching and individual working.
- The pace of learning was brisk and pupils were given appropriately challenging work.
- Pupils had good opportunities to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to support their learning.
- Pupils were attentive, enthusiastic and conscientious in their learning.

- Attainment was regularly and systematically assessed. National Tests were used appropriately to confirm pupils' progress.

6. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare

Staff knew their pupils very well and provided very good support for their care and welfare. The school had established appropriate procedures for child protection and was taking effective steps to promote racial and gender equality.

Personal and social development

The school had very good arrangements for the development of pupils' personal and social skills. A well-planned personal and social development programme included frequent opportunities for pupils to discuss issues of interest. The very good range of visits and contacts with other schools effectively promoted the development of pupils' self-confidence.

Support for learning

Arrangements to support pupils' learning were very good. The school's approaches to providing appropriate challenge for all pupils ensured that their needs were very well met. Non-teaching support staff were very well deployed and made a valuable contribution to supporting pupils at all stages.

7. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher was forward looking, provided very good leadership and was highly committed to the school. She had developed very good relationships with staff, pupils and parents, and had strengthened links with schools on the Small Isles and on the mainland. She had successfully developed an ethos of achievement and worked hard to ensure that her pupils were not disadvantaged by the remoteness of the island.

The school had an appropriate set of aims which were reflected in its policies and practice.

Staff development and review

The headteacher's work had been reviewed as part of the education authority's scheme. She was assiduous in pursuing her professional development and had participated in a very good range of appropriate training activities. Her staff development activities had significantly benefited the work of the school.

School development planning

The quality of the school development plan was very good. It was based on a careful audit of provision and took very good account of national and local priorities. Previous development plans had been very ambitious. Nonetheless, their targets had been achieved.

Approaches to improving quality

The school's arrangements for quality assurance were very good. The headteacher had used national performance indicators to evaluate the school's work, and had also consulted with staff, pupils and parents. She effectively monitored the work of visiting staff and discussed their programmes with them. She had a very accurate view of learning and teaching throughout the school and tracked individual pupils' progress very well.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided a very good quality of education. The headteacher had worked effectively to promote a very supportive atmosphere and to raise attainment. She had ensured that pupils' experience was not limited by the school's relative isolation.

Key strengths

- The ethos of the school.
- The links with parents, the School Board, the island community and neighbouring schools.
- Attainment in English language, mathematics and social subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning.
- The quality of self-evaluation and development.
- The headteacher's management of the school.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should act on the following recommendation.

- The headteacher should ensure that pupils have adequate experience of problem solving and enquiry in the mathematics programme.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations. The school and education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main points for action in the report and to share that plan with parents.

R E McKinstry
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division

3 September 2002

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- The school's ethos
- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- Provision of staff
- Provision of materials and equipment
- The school's management of devolved finances
- Quality of courses or programmes
- Quality of the teaching process
- Quality of pupils' learning
- Matching the teaching process to pupils' needs and experience
- Using assessment to guide the teaching process
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work
- The school development plan
- Implementing the school development plan
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *good*

- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- The structure of the curriculum
- Quality of teachers' planning

We judged the following to be *fair*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Quality of lessons observed

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 83% of cases and good in 17%. There were no fair or unsatisfactory lessons.

How can you contact us?

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 the office at HM Inspectorate of Education, 28 Longman Road, Longman East, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our web site: www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie

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 Bill Maxwell, HMCI whose address is given below. If you are still dissatisfied with our services, you can contact your member of the Scottish Parliament (or, if you prefer, any other MSP) and ask for your complaint to be passed to the Scottish Parliament Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. He will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, he will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right first if we can.

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