

**Knockbreck Primary School  
Tain  
The Highland Council  
9 May 2006**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Key strengths</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. How well are pupils supported?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. How good is the environment for learning?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7. Improving the school</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Indicators of quality</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>How can you contact us?</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1. Background

Knockbreck Primary School was inspected in February 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, representatives of the Friends of Knockbreck Primary School, and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The school serves part of the town of Tain. At the time of the inspection the roll was 74. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

The school had been without a substantive headteacher for two years. During this time there had been two periods of acting headship. A permanent headteacher was appointed in August 2005.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their behaviour, good manners and awareness of one another's needs.
- The commitment and teamwork of the staff and their high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Arrangements for pupils to develop their information and communications technology (ICT), English language, mathematics and enterprise education skills across the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of partnerships with parents and the community in improving pupils' learning.
- The impact of the leadership of the school, and the support of the authority, on improving the school.

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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

### **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.

Parents were very pleased with provision at the school. They believed their children enjoyed being at school and that it had a warm family atmosphere. They felt that the school kept them well informed about how their child was getting on and that it dealt with any concerns effectively. Pupils were also happy with their school. Almost all agreed that teachers explained things clearly, told them how their work could be improved and praised them when they had done well. A small number felt that the behaviour of some pupils was not good. Staff were positive about all aspects of the school. They enjoyed working in the school and reported that they had good opportunities to influence decision making. They felt that they looked after pupils well and that the school was well led.

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

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

The school provided a broad and well-balanced curriculum which helped develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Additional time given to English language and mathematics had been used successfully to raise pupils' attainment. Recently introduced Enterprise activities had enabled pupils to work cooperatively and take responsibility for planning and organising events. Pupils had good opportunities to develop their ICT, English language and mathematical skills across the curriculum. Teachers were skilled at providing instructions and explanations. In the best practice, teachers used questioning very effectively to extend pupils' learning. They used a wide range of activities to appeal to pupils' interests and experiences. At the upper stages, teachers were linking reading and writing activities very effectively with opportunities to research and present information. In English language, pupils were given helpful information about their strengths and personal learning targets in writing. In mathematics, teachers' corrections of pupils' written work was less effective in telling pupils what they needed to do to improve. At the early stages, pupils had limited opportunities to be active in their learning, for example through planned play.

All pupils were enthusiastic, hard working and well-behaved. P4 and P5 pupils collaborated effectively to extend their thinking and understanding when solving problems in mathematics. The pace of learning was good in most lessons. At the early stages pupils were taking responsibility for writing independently. At all stages, pupils were provided with very good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the local and wider community. All pupils used ICT skilfully for a range of learning activities, including carrying out research for their personal health targets.

Pupils were offered a range of opportunities which helped them achieve well in a number of areas. The school promoted pupils' health by encouraging pupils to participate in a range of sporting events including running, football, badminton and

swimming competitions. Pupils' confidence benefited from regular opportunities to perform at public concerts which included singing, drumming and violin playing. Pupils in P1 and P2 had exercised a high degree of independence in an ambitious enterprise project producing and selling well designed school calendars.

### **English language**

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good and had been sustained in recent years. At the lower stages almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing. At the upper stages most pupils were achieving these levels. At all stages most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening and talking. Overall, the majority of pupils were exceeding appropriate national levels. Pupils who experienced difficulty with their learning were making very good progress in English language. Pupils listened well to one another and the teacher and talked confidently at assemblies. Pupils at the upper stages had linked the skills of reading for information with presenting information to the class. At all stages, pupils read fluently with good comprehension and were encouraged to read widely for pleasure. They understood how writers achieved specific effects and this had helped improve their own writing. Pupils at all stages enjoyed writing for a variety of purposes. At the early stages, pupils could identify direct speech in texts. At the middle stages, pupils used their wide vocabulary to describe feelings and characters. Those at P4 and P5 used persuasive language well in designing tourist brochures. At the upper stages, pupils were skilled at developing a character in their story writing.

### **Mathematics**

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good and had been sustained in recent years. Almost all pupils at the early and middle stages had attained appropriate national levels of attainment. At the upper stages, most attained these levels. At all stages the majority of pupils were exceeding national attainment levels. Pupils at the early stages were skilled at producing graphs. By the upper stages pupils used computers skilfully to produce graphs. The emphasis the school had placed on mental calculations had enabled pupils to use numbers quickly and confidently. Pupils at the upper stages had a sound understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. At all stages pupils could measure accurately. Pupils at the middle stages demonstrated a very good understanding of symmetry and at the upper stages they confidently identified angles and the properties of triangles. At all stages pupils were making very good progress with problem solving and were able to use appropriate strategies to help them solve problems.

## **5. How well are pupils supported?**

The school's arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils were very good. Staff worked collectively to create a calm and positive environment where mutual respect and encouragement were key features. Pupils felt confident in the school's arrangements for dealing with any incidents of bullying. The school had a clear range of health and safety policies, including child protection, which were shared and used appropriately by staff. The school had very good arrangements to promote pupils'

understanding of healthy lifestyles. Appropriate arrangements were in place to share information on sensitive health issues with parents.

Tasks and activities were well matched to pupils' needs and appealed to their interests. Higher achieving pupils, particularly at the middle and upper stages, were making very good progress. In a few lessons at the early stages, tasks were inappropriate to the needs of pupils. The school's approach to health and enterprise met pupils' needs well. Staff had begun to identify and share learning targets with pupils in some curriculum areas. This was not yet widespread enough to give pupils a clearer focus on their next steps in learning. Pupils who experienced difficulties with their learning or behaviour were having their needs quickly identified and very well met. Almost all were making very good progress in their learning. Teachers, pupils and parents had agreed appropriate long and short term targets in Individualised Educational Plans. The school worked very effectively with a range of specialists to support pupils' learning. Teachers were working hard, with assistance from Polish speakers within the community, to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). However, they did not receive enough direct support from the authority's specialist services for EAL. The support for learning teacher provided very strong support to the school. She played a leading role in assisting teachers to assess and address pupils' needs. She taught groups and individuals and provided teachers with good professional advice and resources. The focus of her duties was regularly reviewed in association with class teachers. A social communication group was helping pupils learn to relate appropriately to one another. Classroom assistants and support for learning auxiliaries provided very strong support to pupils. Their training and deployment had been well planned to enable them to provide highly effective support.

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

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The well maintained school building and grounds provided very good accommodation for pupils. The location of the four classrooms around a central library and ICT suite enabled pupils to access essential resources effectively. The gymnasium was well equipped. Displays of pupils work, including the effective use of photographs, promoted a sense of pride in achievements. There were appropriate arrangements in place for security and playing fields were well fenced. There were some weaknesses in pupils' toilet facilities. These were unattractive and lacked soap and hot water. The playground surface was uneven. However, the authority had plans to address this. Arrangements for dropping-off and uplifting of pupils by vehicles using the small car park were potentially hazardous. The building was accessible to disabled users.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Climate</b>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>There was a friendly, welcoming and business-like atmosphere in the school. Staff knew their pupils very well and were sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs and individual circumstances. Pupils were polite, courteous and exceptionally well behaved. They spontaneously praised and rewarded one another. Staff used praise and rewards very effectively to encourage pupils to work hard. At all stages, teachers had very high expectations of pupils learning and behaviour. Pupils carried out a range of responsibilities conscientiously and kept other pupils well informed of their work. The children enjoyed opportunities for religious observance at weekly assemblies presented by any one of four local ministers. The school's racial equality policy ensured and promoted equality. Pupils learned about different cultures through their religious and moral education programme. Pupils also developed their understanding of the needs of others by raising significant sums for a range of charities.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Parents had very good opportunities to be involved with their children's learning. Parents evenings were well attended and detailed reports identified future learning targets. In addition, parents received regular informative newsletters and personal letters reporting significant achievements by their children. Younger pupils received stimulating homework materials which involved parents effectively. The school produced a comprehensive handbook for parents and had run workshops for them on aspects of the curriculum. The School Board supported the school well. Many parents and members of the community were "Friends of Knockbreck Primary School", and supported the school well by raising funds and organising events. Parents and staff also ran activities outwith the formal curriculum, including a lunchtime ICT club. The community was invited to regular concerts and sporting events. Pupils had recently performed World War II songs for elderly members of the community. The school had developed links with the local museum and Polish artist in residence in an arts project for the local Polish community. Local police, nurse and dental services were appropriately involved in pupils' learning throughout the year. Staff prepared pupils for the next stage in their education very effectively in partnership with local nurseries and the secondary school.</p>

## 7. Improving the school

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

A significant feature of Knockbreck Primary School was the strong work ethic of the pupils and the climate of mutual support. Pupils responded enthusiastically to well planned learning experiences and were making very good progress. A series of acting headteachers over recent years had worked with the staff to improve the school, with strong support from the authority. The current headteacher had been in post for six months. Her own teaching was a model of best practice. She gave staff clear direction in developing key areas of the curriculum including improvements in the teaching of reading and writing. She had started to help pupils to improve their learning. She had begun to further improve teaching approaches.

The headteacher monitored teachers planning, classroom teaching and pupils' work and achievements. She used this information effectively to provide feedback to teachers and pupils. Teachers had good access to appropriate staff development opportunities. The headteacher planned to engage parents further in the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and its plans for improvement. The school had a very good capacity to continue to improve with the ongoing strong support of the authority.

### **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:

- continue to develop successful approaches to English language and extend these to all stages; and
- build on existing good practice to ensure pupils have a clear understanding of their learning targets in all curriculum areas.

### **What happens next?**

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 the education authority working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Jacqueline Sinclair  
HM Inspector

9 May 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.

<b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	
Structure of the curriculum	Very good
The teaching process	Good
Pupils' learning experiences	Very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	Very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	Very good

<b>How well are pupils supported?</b>	
Pastoral care	Excellent
Meeting pupils' needs	Good

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Accommodation and facilities	Very good
Climate and relationships	Excellent
Expectations and promoting achievement	Very good
Equality and fairness	Very good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	Very good

<b>Improving the school</b>	
Leadership	Very good
Self-evaluation	Very good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
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>• School reports and parents' evenings provided helpful information about children's progress.</li> <li>• School buildings were kept in good order.</li> <li>• The school dealt effectively with any matters of concern raised by parents.</li> <li>• There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children and treated them fairly.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small number would like more information on the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.</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>• They enjoyed school.</li> <li>• The school helped them to keep safe and healthy and looked after them well.</li> <li>• Teachers explained things clearly, helped them when they had difficulties with classwork and explained how their learning could be improved.</li> <li>• Teachers gave them the right amount of homework and checked it.</li> <li>• Teachers told them when they had done well and gave them a say in how to make the school better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the behaviour of a small number of pupils.</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>• They enjoyed working in the school.</li> <li>• There was effective communication amongst staff who all had good opportunities to be involved in decision making.</li> <li>• Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment.</li> <li>• Pupils were enthusiastic learners.</li> <li>• Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils and celebrated their successes.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</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 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).

### **If you wish to comment about primary inspections**

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### **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](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. 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](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.scottishombudsman.org.uk](http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk).

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