

**Melvich Primary School
Thurso
Interim follow-through
The Highland Council
18 December 2007**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Melvich Primary School in December 2006. The report indicated that HM Inspectors would engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress and would publish an interim report within one year of the publication of the original report.

Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report. HM Inspectors carried out an interim follow-through visit to the school in October 2007. The team assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

Teaching staff had taken effective steps to improve their professional practice by attending helpful training events organised by the education authority. School staff had made effective use of new resources to develop pupils' skills in mental mathematics, and improve reading at the early stages. A new teacher had been recently appointed in the P1 to P3 class.

The school and education authority had improved aspects of the school's accommodation including the redecoration of teaching areas. The headteacher had leadership responsibilities for three primary schools. She met regularly with staff to offer advice, monitor the quality of the school's work and discuss pupils' progress. She had effectively sought pupils' views through the pupil council and involved pupils more in deciding how to make improvements to the school's work. Pupils had benefited from a range of helpful cultural and sporting activities undertaken as part of The Highland Year of Culture. Visiting specialists included Feis Rois music tutors who enhanced pupils' experiences of traditional music.

Staff had given pupils valuable opportunities to become responsible citizens and considerate members of the school and wider community. These had included pupils' involvement in carol singing and in visits to the local senior citizens' home. Staff had improved arrangements for parents to support their children's learning. These included the introduction of a new home/school diary and better homework activities for P4 to P7 pupils.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in December 2006 identified four main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Improve the quality of the curriculum.

The school had made some positive progress in meeting this main point for action.

The headteacher had put in place structured programmes in many curriculum areas and had provided appropriate useful written guidance. This guidance had assisted staff in ensuring the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in key areas. The headteacher had worked effectively with the education authority's Active Schools Coordinator to provide additional opportunities for pupils to engage in energetic physical activity. The headteacher had introduced helpful new resources and worked effectively with staff to promote pupils' use of information and communications technology. This work had yet to have significant impact in ensuring the consistent development of pupils' skills in this area. More remained to be done to ensure effective planning of programmes and evaluation of their effectiveness, particularly in personal and social development, and citizenship. Pupils' understanding of race equality and diversity was not yet sufficiently consistent or regular.

3.2 Improve the support and advice provided for staff to help them improve the quality of learning, teaching and achievement for pupils.

The school and education authority had made a useful start to addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher and education authority staff had provided a range of helpful advice and support to teachers. This included regular meetings with staff to share good practice. Teachers now shared their expectations more effectively with pupils. They set out clearly for pupils what they expected them to learn and most pupils were responding well. Teachers gave pupils helpful feedback on how to improve their work, particularly in writing. Pupils had increased opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups, for example, on writing and problem solving tasks. The headteacher had introduced helpful new planning procedures. These had not yet had significant impact in improving pupils' learning experiences. Staff now assessed pupils' day-to-day progress well but did not yet use this information effectively to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers did not always ensure that tasks set were sufficiently challenging to meet all pupils' needs. More remained to be done to ensure that aspects of good practice in learning and teaching were maintained consistently throughout the school.

3.3 Improve how pupils' attainment is monitored and progressed.

The school had made some progress in addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher had established an annual timetable which set out clearly how the school would evaluate its provision. She monitored teachers' plans and commented in writing upon the quality of planning. The headteacher sampled pupils' jotters and tracked pupils' progress more effectively, using materials supplied by the education authority. She had visited classes to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and had shared her written comments with teaching staff. These arrangements were not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure that appropriate action was taken to remedy identified weaknesses. The quality of learning and teaching was not yet consistent throughout the school and attainment in English language and mathematics had not improved.

3.4 Improve the condition of facilities for outdoor play.

The education authority had made little progress in addressing this main point for action.

The pupil council had successfully raised funds and purchased new outdoor play equipment. The education authority had not yet improved the playground surface to make it suitable for playground games. Much remained to be done to ensure that pupils had an appropriately safe area in which to play.

4. Conclusion

The school and education authority had made a promising start to meeting some of the main points for action in the inspection report of December 2006. Progress in addressing other main points for action had been slower. The headteacher had improved aspects of the curriculum and had provided helpful support and advice to staff. Much remained to be done to improve the accommodation and ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress. Working with the continuing support of the education authority, the headteacher had the capacity to improve the school further. HMIE will continue to engage with the school and education authority and will provide another report on progress for parents and carers within one year of the publication of this report.

June Graham
HM Inspector

18 December 2007

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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Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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.

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