



**Melvich Primary School
Thurso
The Highland Council
16 December 2008**

We published a report on Melvich Primary School in December 2006. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out an interim follow-through inspection in October 2007 and we published a report on this visit in December 2007. This is the report of the follow-through inspection, carried out in October 2008.

This follow-through report tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

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

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1. The school

Melvich Primary School serves the village of Melvich and the surrounding area. An acting headteacher has led the school since December 2007, when the headteacher took up another post. The acting headteacher also has leadership responsibility for Farr Primary School.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The welcoming atmosphere in the school.
- Polite, confident and enthusiastic children.
- Improvements to the school's accommodation.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Children are effectively developing their confidence and self esteem through participating in a range of well-planned, interesting activities. For example, those at P4 to P7 have developed useful interview skills through questioning football players about racism in football. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Staff are beginning to improve children's experiences in using information and communications technology to support their learning across the curriculum. Some activities in English language and mathematics do not always provide enough challenge for children, particularly at the early stages. Staff are making a good start in encouraging children to take responsibility for their own learning in all areas of the curriculum.

4. How well do staff work with others to improve children's learning?

Staff are beginning to encourage parents to be more involved in their children's learning. The school needs to continue to develop opportunities to involve parents more in the life of the school. Staff are at the early stages of planning environmental and enterprise activities across the school. The education authority has significantly improved the outdoor playing areas, which are now suitable for playground games and outdoor learning. Security and heating systems are now of an appropriate standard.

Much of the school has been redecorated and improved. Children are now very positive about their learning environment and are responding well.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff are using some effective approaches to ensure children are developing as responsible citizens. These approaches include a range of activities as part of the school's efforts to become an Eco-friendly school. The Pupil Council has been involved in improving some aspects of the accommodation, including toilet facilities. Staff are working well together to improve the reading experiences of children and had sought the views of the Pupil Council about this. More remains to be done to ensure children are fully involved in making decisions to improve their community.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

The school has a welcoming atmosphere and children have positive relationships with their teachers. Staff encourage children to work hard through a range of methods such as the use of reward activities, stickers and certificates. Children respond well, and work keenly and confidently at the tasks set for them. Teachers do not yet have high enough expectations of children's attainment. Staff are committed to the well being and support of all children and are knowledgeable about effective child protection procedures. They know what to do when the acting headteacher is not in school, in connection with her other leadership duties. Children feel safe at school and think that all children are treated fairly. They are confident about discussing any issues of concern with any member of staff.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The acting headteacher, with the support of the education authority, has clearly identified appropriate areas for school improvement. She is working well with staff to develop the school's systems for making improvements. Staff are working together more effectively to evaluate the quality of the school's provision. Staff are beginning to improve the quality of their teaching and the quality of children's learning experiences. Overall, Melvich Primary School has an increasing capacity to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

There is evidence of improvement since the original inspection, and the school now performs well overall. The curriculum and improvements through self-evaluation are now at a satisfactory level or better. With continued strong leadership, commitment of staff and support from the education authority, the school will have the potential to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the December 2006 inspection report. The District Inspector will continue to liaise with the education authority in monitoring the school's progress.

HM Inspector: June Graham
16 December 2008

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