



**Golspie High School  
The Highland Council  
28 April 2009**

We published a report on Golspie High School in June 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in February 2009. It 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 young people 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 parents<sup>1</sup>. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well young people 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.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk). Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

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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.

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### **1. The school**

Golspie High School serves the village of Golspie, neighbouring villages and surrounding rural communities.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- The joint working with a range of other agencies to support young people's learning.
- The range of curricular and out of class experiences available for young people at all stages.

## **3. How well do young people learn and achieve?**

The school has identified a number of priorities to help it improve. As a result it has taken some promising steps to improve young people's learning and achievement. In some departments, young people are becoming more responsible for their own learning. More teachers now provide young people with stimulating and challenging learning activities. Across the school, teachers now share the purposes of learning more regularly with young people. In a few departments young people's learning experiences are still too variable and do not always match their needs. The school recognises the need to ensure that all young people enjoy consistently high quality learning experiences in every class. Young people's attainments improved in 2008 in reading, writing and mathematics at S1/S2. In 2008 young people's attainments improved at S4 but were significantly weaker at S5. Overall, young people's attainments remain too variable. The school has increased the wide range of opportunities for young people to achieve through new activities such as the community sports leader award scheme.

#### **4. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?**

Staff are very committed to young people's welfare and learning. The school has made significant improvements to the ways it provides and records pastoral support for young people. All young people are now aware of their pastoral teacher and arrangements for individual and group contacts are much better. Local groups and agencies work closely with pastoral staff to provide valuable support for groups of young people, such as the significant number of young carers. Pastoral staff have made worthwhile improvements to the personal and social education programme. Young people are not yet fully aware of Internet safety. The school has taken some early, but promising, steps to improve young people's learning and achievement through closer working with its associated primary schools. Parents now work with teachers and young people in task groups to plan improvements to learning. The school responds positively to suggestions for improvement from the active Parent Council. The school has developed its links with local colleges and community enterprises to prepare young people more effectively for the world of work. New Open University and other distance learning courses provide challenging learning experiences for young people in S5/S6.

#### **5. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?**

Staff and young people work together with parents to improve aspects of the school that include learning and teaching, homework and behaviour. Staff are committed to improving the school, although a few have yet to become fully involved beyond their own subject areas. School staff are improving the ways in which they review the quality of their work. Staff have started to observe one another's lessons, to share good practice and to provide colleagues with helpful advice. They should now do so more regularly and consistently, with a greater focus on improving young people's learning and achievement. A few teachers ask young people for their opinions in order to improve their

teaching and lessons. Young people in S5/S6 make important contributions to improving the school. They act as 'buddies' supporting young people in the junior years. The school is well placed to provide young people in S1 to S4 with more opportunities to contribute to the school and to develop as citizens.

## **6. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?**

The school has taken some important steps to encourage young people to achieve better. Young people work more regularly with their pastoral teachers to set targets for their own learning. A few teachers' expectations of what young people can achieve are too low and arrangements for homework are too variable. The school should now ensure that all young people have realistic but challenging learning targets. Pastoral staff are more involved in setting targets with young people. Class teachers are not, as yet, sufficiently involved in the process. The school has yet to fully develop systems to monitor and record young people's progress and to use the information to plan the next steps in their learning. The school has revised its arrangements for encouraging good behaviour in classrooms and in other areas. The behaviour of a small number of pupils continues to interfere with the learning of others.

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

The headteacher has identified what the school needs to do to improve. Senior managers have contributed effectively to the improvements that have taken place over the past year. They have consulted widely and involved teachers, young people and parents in discussing and planning improvements in key areas. The planned improvements should now be taken forward at a more brisk pace. Almost all staff take increasing responsibility for improving the school. Most have the capacity to be involved more directly in leading teams and developments. All staff now need to work together more

consistently to take forward the developments that will lead to improved learning and greater achievement for all young people.

## **8. What happens next?**

The school has significantly improved its arrangements for the care and welfare of young people. Young people's attainment, although still variable, has improved at several stages. The school has increased its capacity to improve through, for example, greater involvement of staff, young people and parents. Progress in meeting learners' needs and in providing young people with appropriate learning experiences remains weak. As set out in the original report of June 2008, we will carry out a further follow-through visit to the school and will report to parents, within one year of the publication of this report, on the extent of the improvement that has been achieved.

**Managing Inspector:** Douglas Marr  
28 April 2009

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