



**Golspie High School
The Highland Council
23 March 2010**

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. We carried out a follow-through inspection in February 2009 and published a report on that visit in April 2009.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in February 2010. 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 parents¹. 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. Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

Golspie High School serves the village of Golspie, neighbouring villages and surrounding rural communities. An acting headteacher has been in post since October 2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Staff's commitment to the education and welfare of the young people in their care.
- The wide range of opportunities and activities that encourage all young people to learn and achieve.
- Strong partnerships that provide young people with effective support.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people's learning experiences are better. Young people are now more confident and more responsible for their own learning. They are clearer about what they need to do to improve. Most teachers now provide young people with more consistent and challenging activities. Young people have more opportunity to work together and to help one another to learn. As a result, they achieve more in class. Most teachers use assessment information more effectively to meet the needs of all young people, including those who require additional support. Teachers do not always plan and use homework consistently to support learning. Young people's attainment in mathematics at S1/2 has improved over the past three years, but is more variable in reading and writing. Young people's attainment at S3-S6 is variable, but was stronger at S5 in 2009. A relatively high proportion of young people at S5/6 do not obtain awards in key subjects. Young people continue to achieve well in a wide range of activities outside the classroom.

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

Staff work flexibly and responsively with partner organisations to support all young people in and out of school. Teachers now work more closely with primary colleagues to help young people, including those with additional support needs, to transfer easily to the secondary school. Primary and secondary staff are now well placed to work together to further improve learning and teaching. All young people know whom to contact for advice and support. Young people and their parents are now more aware of how to keep safe when using the Internet. At all stages, young people benefit from the very effective revision of the school's personal, social and health education programmes. Young people at S3-S6 gain valuable skills and insights through work experience and work-related courses provided in partnership with colleges of further education.

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

Staff, young people and parents are very committed to improving the school. Most teachers now observe one another's lessons and provide helpful advice. The school does not yet collect and share the good practice observed. Some staff still lack confidence to use examination information to plan for improvement. Almost all staff are members of groups that work to improve the school. Members of the very active Parent Council work with staff and young people in school improvement groups. Almost all young people are proud of their school and work hard to maintain and improve provision. Many of them support younger learners and make effective contributions to the community and local organisations.

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

The acting headteacher has set higher standards and expectations. Almost all young people respond well and behaviour in classes is much better. More young people show pride in their school by wearing uniform. Most staff have higher expectations of young people. They work with young people to raise their achievement by setting learning targets that are shared with parents. Staff do not always provide young people with enough specific advice to help them achieve their targets. Teachers do not always make effective use of information and communications technology to help young people set targets and record their progress.

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

The acting headteacher provides strong and supportive leadership. He frequently consults staff, young people and parents. He successfully involves senior staff and faculty leaders in making improvements at departmental and whole school levels. Almost all staff make increasingly effective contributions to school improvement. Staff work together more effectively to improve the quality of young people's learning and achievements. Morale and confidence are much higher amongst staff, young people and parents.

8. What happens next?

The school has improved significantly under the leadership of the acting headteacher. Many of the improvements are relatively new and will take time to have significant impact on learning and achievement. We will carry out a further follow through visit to the school within one year of the publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

HM Inspector: Douglas Marr
23 March 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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