The Highland Council

Skye, Ross and Cromarty Area Committee 5 August 2015

Agenda Item	14
Report No	SRC/044/15

Education Scotland Reports – Milton Primary, Tain Royal Academy, Alness Academy and St Clement's School

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report provides details of Education Scotland's published reports on the four schools in the area listed above.

1. Introduction to Inspections

- 1.1 Education Scotland aims to provide assurance on the quality of Scottish education and promote improvement and innovation to enhance learners' experiences and lead to better outcomes. Their inspections also contribute to National Performance Framework reporting.
- 1.2 Each year, they inspect and report on the quality of education in a sample of preschool centres, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, community learning and development services, colleges and residential educational provision. They also inspect the education functions of local authorities.
- 1.3 To support improvement, inspectors focus on the quality of children and young people's learning and achievement. They have a particular interest in the development of children and young people's skills and understanding in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing which enables access to the highest possible learning within a broad general education and beyond.
- 1.4 Details of all aspects of the work of Education Scotland along with all the reference documentation can be found on the <u>Education Scotland</u> website.
- 1.5 Where an Education Scotland visit shows that ongoing engagement with a school is required to ensure that improvements have been made, a follow-up visit will be scheduled, normally within 12-18 months.

2. Inspections Conducted

School	Area	Inspection Date	Nature of Inspection	Publication Date	Action
Milton Primary	Easter Ross	February 2015	Continued Engagement	3 March 2015	Education Scotland will make no further visits in connection with the report of January 2014.
Tain Royal Academy	Easter Ross	April 2015	Continued Engagement	9 June 2015	Education Scotland will return to carry out a further inspection within 18 months.

Alness	Easter	April 2015	Full	5 May 2015	Education Scotland will
Academy	Ross				return to carry out a
					further inspection within
					18 months.
St Clement's	Mid Ross	May 2015	Continued	23 June 2015	Education Scotland will
School			Engagement		make no further visits in
					connection with the
					report of 2014.

- 2.2 Members are advised that as reports are published following inspection, they will be referred directly to Members and may be discussed at Ward Business Meetings.
- 2.3 In this way relevant Members will see each published report as they arrive in the relevant area, with the required degree of immediacy.
- 2.4 Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the Education Scotland publication How good is our school? Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools are doing.
- 2.5 Education Scotland evaluations are made on a 6-point scale as follows:
 - * Excellent/Very Good/Good/Satisfactory/Weak/Unsatisfactory
 Three of the Education Scotland visits mentioned above were Continued
 Engagement visits and therefore there were no evaluations given. A brief
 summary of each visit is given below.

2.6 **Milton Primary**

The Education Scotland visit identified the following key improvements:

- * children are much more active in their learning
- * children have a better understanding of their own progress
- * standards of attainment are showing early signs of improvement
- * children talk more confidently about how to improve their reading and writing
- * teachers are meeting the needs of children more effectively
- * pace and challenge in lessons has increased
- * Pupil Support Assistants provide strong support across the school
- * school security and practical arrangements to ensure safety have been enhanced
 - * homework is used more consistently
 - * children use ICT more effectively in their learning
 - * staff have worked very well together to make improvements
- * the new Head Teacher (Isobel Sutherland) has provided very strong leadership and direction.

The following key recommendations were made:

- * staff should continue to develop children's ability to set their own targets in learning
 - * staff should continue to embed these improvements.

The full Education Scotland Report can be found here. Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the inspection letter of January 2014.

2.7 Tain Royal Academy

The visit to Tain Royal Academy was carried out as a joint activity with Highland Council Officers working alongside the Education Scotland Area Lead Officer. This new model for Continuing Engagement visits is likely to become more common in the future.

The visit identified the following key improvements:

- * pupils are motivated
- * learning activities are interesting and relevant, especially in Gaelic provision
- * staff are developing the curriculum to improve learning continuity
- * in the senior phase teachers track learners' progress more effectively
- * in most classes tasks and activities are appropriately challenging
- * leadership in the school is increasingly effective.

The following key recommendations were made:

- * staff should continue to find ways to challenge the most able learners
- * Faculty Heads and Principal Teachers should ensure that self-evaluation activity leads to clear improvements
- * Highland Council should appoint an effective permanent leadership team as quickly as possible.

The full Education Scotland Report can be found here. Education Scotland will return to carry out a further inspection within 18 months.

2.8 Alness Academy

For the Alness Academy Full Inspection visit, the following evaluations were made:

Quality Indicator	Alness Academy
Improvements in performance	weak
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory
The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

The visit identified the following key areas for improvement:

- * learning experiences are not of a consistently high enough quality, with pupils often too passive
- * attainment does not match that of young people with similar needs and backgrounds
 - * the pace of learning is too slow in too many lessons
- * the school does not have a clear enough overview of young people's progress in S1-S3.

The visit identified the following key strengths:

- * pupils enjoy learning, behave well and engage positively with lessons
- * good use is being made of digital learning
- * there are many opportunities for pupils to gain skills through planned activities
- * pupils with additional support needs are well supported
- * the new Head Teacher (Laura Gordon) has established a clear vision for improving the school
 - * there is a growing commitment to self-evaluation in the school.

The following key recommendations were made:

* the school should improve learning and teaching to engage young people and support them in attaining as highly as possible

- * the school should review and develop the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all young people
- * the school should develop self-evaluation further to ensure it leads consistently to improvements in young people's learning and achievements.
- * the school should continue to develop leadership to ensure staff at all levels take appropriate responsibility for improving young people's learning and achievement.

The full Education Scotland Report can be found <u>here</u>. Education Scotland will return to carry out a further inspection within 18 months.

2.9 St Clement's School

The visit identified the following key improvements:

- * pupils have much better learning experiences, are more actively engaged with their learning and enjoy their lessons more
 - * teachers are meeting learners' needs more effectively
 - * young people have more choice in their learning
 - * provision for young people with autism spectrum disorders is much improved
 - * learners are making much better progress with literacy and numeracy
 - * there is now more accreditation of young people's achievements
 - * the school curriculum now has a clear rationale
 - * the school now works more effectively with partners
 - * communication and team working are much improved
- * the excellent leadership of the Head Teacher (Toni Macartney) has led to more effective staff working

The following key recommendations were made:

* staff should continue to embed the improvements made to date

The full Education Scotland Report can be found <u>here</u>. Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the inspection letter of June 2014.

2.10 As part of ongoing engagement with the Highland Council, Education Scotland may visit schools on a support basis: this includes the schools mentioned above.

3. Actions as a Result of Inspection

- 3.1 The Authority and Head Teacher are provided with both the report and a 'record of inspection findings' (RIF).
- 3.2 These documents evidence both good practice and areas for improvement and using this, the school will adapt its School Improvement Plan and report annually about the impact on learners through the Standards and Quality Report.
- 3.3 Quality Improvement Officers will continue to work with each of these schools to ensure that improvements are made and that such improvements are sustained over time.

4. Comparison

4.1 Members are advised that it is not possible to use Education Scotland reports to compare across schools, as the curriculum is now tailored by schools to their individual circumstances, within the overall quality indicators.

4.2 Furthermore, it is not possible to compare previous reports for a school with more recent reports. This is due to changes in the inspection focus from year to year. The link below provides the advice note from Education Scotland for the session 2013-14:

Link: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ESInspectionAdviceNote20132014 tcm4-809751.pdf

- 4.3 The latest advice note in respect of session 2014-15 is provided through the link below, and Members will note the increased emphasis on "self-evaluation" by schools, and the targeted approach on issues for this session.

 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ESInspectionAdviceNote201415 tcm4-832523.pdf
- 4.4 Consequently, reports should be viewed as a single snap-shot of a school's performance, against a suite of national quality indicators as laid down in *How good is our school*.
- 4.5 In session 2015-16 inspection activity will reflect the most recent advice note which can be found here:

 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/i/genericresource_tcm4865189.asp

5. Implications

5.1 There are no resources, legal, equalities, climate change/carbon clever, risk, Gaelic or rural implications arising from this report.

6. Recommendation

6.1 The Area Committee is asked to scrutinise and note this report on Education Scotland engagements with Milton Primary, Tain Royal Academy, Alness Academy and St Clement's School.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 26 July 2015

Author: Donald Paterson, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Mid



3 March 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Milton Primary School and Nursery Class The Highland Council

In January 2014, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well children are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the nursery class at the same time and that report is available at www.careinspectorate.com.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Since the original inspection, the school has undergone significant changes to staffing. A new headteacher, new class teachers, and new early years practitioners have all taken up their posts since our previous visit. A number of these teachers are working in the school on a temporary basis.

Across the primary stages and the nursery, children are motivated, engaged and much more active in their learning. In the nursery class, children continue to be happy and settled. Outdoor learning experiences are a key positive feature of the nursery, through the weekly sessions in the woods or daily use of their outdoor area whatever the weather, for example learning and play in the snow. Across the primary stages, children are learning well. Standards of behaviour are high. Children are attentive during lessons, and work well independently and in pairs or groups. Staff regularly discuss with children what they are expected to learn during lessons. As a result, children have a better understanding of their own progress. Children now regularly use targets to support and review their learning. Staff now expect children to achieve more in lessons.

Standards of attainment are showing early signs of improvement across the primary stages. The school has introduced new ways of finding out how much children have learned. Due to improvements in the language programme children talk more confidently about how to improve their reading and writing. Active learning in numeracy is leading to more solid understanding of numbers and stronger mental agility. To improve children's attainment further, staff should continue to develop children's ability to set targets, taking account of their prior learning. Pupil voice and

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responsibilities are evident through many citizenship groups such as the newly revised house system and pupil council, with children happy to talk about 'a minion reasons to love Milton'.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Teachers are now meeting the needs of all children more effectively. The pace of lessons and challenge within lessons have increased, resulting in children being able to achieve more. Individual child plans are in place for those who require them. Pupil support assistants provide strong support across the school, working with individuals and groups of children as appropriate. School security and practical arrangements for the school day have been improved to enhance safety of the children and make the most of learning time.

Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the new teachers have worked very well together to develop planning to ensure children make suitable progress in their learning. The curriculum is now providing the children with a broad education, reflecting Curriculum for Excellence. Staff have worked very well together to develop more effective ways of monitoring the development of children's skills in literacy and numeracy. Children use information and communications technology well in many aspects of their learning, supported by increased resources and the re-arranged layout in the school. Homework is now used in a more consistent way across the school to support and enhance children's learning, supported by effective use of the new homework diaries. Homework clubs are valued by parents and children. The school should now continue to embed all of these changes to ensure they continue to have a further positive impact on children's learning and attainment. The Parent Council is proactive in supporting aspects of school life.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The new headteacher has provided very strong leadership and direction for the school. She has taken some effective steps to improve planning for learning and to evaluate and improve the work of the school. The current teachers are all highly reflective and all staff across the school work extremely well together as a team. All main points for action from the original inspection are being addressed. There are clear improvements in children's learning and the curriculum, and early signs of improvement in attainment. Staff, children and parents across the nursery and school speak very highly about the new headteacher and the positive leadership she is providing for the school. They are all working together with the new headteacher to take forward the school improvement priorities.

What happens next?

As part of the normal on-going liaison between Education Scotland and The Highland Council our Area Lead Officer will continue to monitor the school's progress. The Highland Council will keep parents informed of progress.

Sally Stewart HM Inspector If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.



5 May 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Alness Academy The Highland Council

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I inspected your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well young people are learning and achieving and how well the school supports young people to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including how the use of digital learning in S4 to S6 is enhancing young people's experiences, and how well partnerships are supporting young people to achieve. As a result, we were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

Most young people enjoy learning at school. They behave well and engage positively in lessons. They get on well with their teachers and value the willingness of staff to support them in homework clubs and at lunchtimes. When given the opportunity, young people work well together in pairs and groups. Across the school, young people's learning experiences are not of a consistently high enough quality. Overall, they are often too passive in their learning as a result of overly teacher-led approaches. They need increased responsibility to lead their own learning and to engage in activities that help them to think for themselves. In most lessons, young people are clear about the purpose of the learning activities and what success looks like, but they do not always understand what they need to do to improve. Young people would benefit from more conversations with teachers about their progress. Where these conversations are happening, young people are more aware of what they are good at and how they can improve their work. The introduction of digital learning through the use of tablet computers in S4 to S6 is enhancing young people's experiences. Teachers are using them well to enable young people to work together inside and outside the classroom and to encourage independent learning through access to course materials and websites. In a few subjects, teachers are using the devices to provide focused feedback on written work.

Young people are gaining in confidence and developing skills through taking part in activities such as the Geoscience Club, the debating society, the Youth Philanthropy Initiative and coaching at Alness United Football Club and Ross Sutherland Rugby Club. A significant number of young people participate in the annual dance drama *Rock Challenge*. The challenge is led by the young people themselves and is

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developing their motivation, leadership skills, ability to work as a team and sense of pride in their school and community. Young people would benefit from identifying the key skills for learning, life and work they are developing through these activities. This will help them understand their strengths and increase their confidence and self-esteem. The school has begun to identify those young people who do not participate in any out-of-class learning. It is taking action to ensure all young people benefit from opportunities for achievement that will help them develop important skills.

The school does not have a clear enough overview of young people's progress from S1 to S3, across all curriculum areas. From S4 to S6, attainment in National Qualifications remains below that of young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The school is aware that staff need to continue to raise the attainment of all young people and secure stronger achievement in national examinations. Most young people are successful in moving on to a positive destination on leaving school. More young people from Alness Academy go on to employment than young people with similar needs and backgrounds in schools across Scotland. There is considerable scope to improve young people's chances of entering further or higher education should they wish to do so. The school should continue to raise expectations of what young people can do and achieve.

How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

Most young people feel safe and cared for in school. Across the school, teachers need to take steps to ensure learning activities are planned to meet the different needs of all young people. In too many lessons, activities are not set at the right level and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers and pupil support staff provide very valuable support to young people who require additional support. The small direct tuition groups in S1 and S2 are supporting young people who need help with numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing very well. The school works well with partner agencies such as Children's Services, youth work staff and mental health workers, to provide relevant and effective support for young people who require it. We have asked the school to continue to work on supporting young people with high absence rates. The school should continue to explore ways of re-engaging these young people and supporting their learning when they are not in class.

The school is continuing to develop its curriculum to reflect national advice relating to Curriculum for Excellence. At S1 to S3, the curriculum is designed to provide a broad general education. This includes opportunities for young people to make connections across their learning through projects such as the World War One project that led to a special school assembly on the theme of Armistice. The school needs to review the learning opportunities at these stages to ensure all young people make suitable progress. All young people in S1 and S2 have opportunities to learn Gaelic. This year, the school has been working with its associated primary schools to introduce Gaelic in P7. Staff across the school are planning for the development of young people's literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that these important aspects of learning are developed at an appropriate level and in a joined-up way across the school. The school should continue to improve the range of courses and programmes on offer to young people from S4 to S6 to cater more fully for young people's needs and interests. This includes working with partners to include more choices for young people who would

benefit from qualifications and training that develop skills for work. A few young people benefit from flexible and individualised programmes which suit their needs well.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

In her first year in post, the headteacher has established a clear vision for improving the school. She is providing effective leadership and encouraging staff to take on more responsibility for improving their practice. She has established a range of systems to evaluate the quality of the school's work. This is resulting in a stronger commitment to self-evaluation amongst staff. Faculty heads have more clearly-defined responsibilities with a strong focus on improving performance in their departments. A few faculty heads are using self-evaluation well to improve learning and achievement in their subjects. Overall however, more needs to be done across faculties to ensure self-evaluation activities lead to better outcomes for young people. Teachers at all levels are keen to lead in a variety of ways. Staff are involved in a range of groups to take forward the school's priorities and a few teachers have taken on leadership roles. At present, it is too early to see the impact of the work of these groups. The school has an effective system for checking young people's achievements from S4 to S6. The school should continue to develop approaches to assess and monitor young people's progress from S1 to S3 to ensure young people at these stages attain as highly as possible. The views of young people and parents are gathered through questionnaires and focus groups. However, there is a need for them to have a greater role in improving the work of the school. The headteacher and the senior leadership team are providing a clear direction for the school. Staff now need to take a strong lead collectively in improving learning, teaching and attainment, working as a team to improve the school.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- The impact of the *Rock Challenge* on young people's personal development.
- The work of partners and support for learning staff in improving outcomes for young people who require additional support.
- The use of digital learning to enhance young people's experiences from S4 to S6.

We discussed with staff and The Highland Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve learning and teaching to engage young people and support them in attaining as highly as possible.
- Review and develop the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all young people.
- Develop self-evaluation further to ensure it leads consistently to improvements in young people's learning and achievements.
- Continue to develop leadership to ensure staff at all levels take appropriate responsibility for improving young people's learning and achievement.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with The Highland Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within 18 months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Mary Byrne HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/AlnessAcademyHighland.asp

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9 June 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Tain Royal Academy The Highland Council

In November 2013, Education Scotland published a report on your child's school. In April 2015, as part of the council's on-going support, officers from The Highland Council Quality Improvement Team carried out a review of the school. Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer was part of the team. The review team found that the school was continuing to improve and identified several areas for action. The detailed findings of the review are available in printed format from the school and from the school website at http://www.tainroyalacademy.org.uk/index.asp?pageid=616296.

Summary review findings

Overall, the school is improving. In most lessons, pupils are motivated. Learning activities are interesting and relevant, particularly in the Gaelic provision. Staff are developing the curriculum from S1 to S3 to improve the continuity of young people's learning. In the senior phase, teachers track and monitor young people's progress more effectively with the aim of ensuring they attain as highly as possible. In most lessons, tasks and activities are appropriately challenging. However, higher-achieving pupils continue to find their work too easy, and as a result, they are not attaining as well as could be expected.

The leadership of the acting headteacher and acting depute headteachers is increasingly effective. There is a clear plan in place for improving the school. Faculty heads and principal teachers should continue to ensure that self-evaluation activities lead consistently to improvements in learning and teaching. The Highland Council needs to appoint an effective permanent leadership team as quickly as possible.

What happens next?

The improvement plan has not yet led to sufficient improvement in learning and teaching and attainment across the school. Staff require more time and further support from The Highland Council to continue to make the necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with The Highland Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. Education Scotland will return to carry out a further inspection within 18 months of

the publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

David Gregory HM Inspector

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23 June 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

St Clement's School and Nursery Class The Highland Council

In June 2014, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's school. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher and other staff how the school has continued to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection and at other aspects of the school's work, as proposed by the headteacher. As a result, we were able to find out how well children and young people are now learning and achieving and how the school is continuing to support them to do their best. This letter sets out what we found.

How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Children and young people now have much better learning experiences as a result of the many improvements introduced by the headteacher and staff. They continue to have very good relationships with teachers and pupil support assistants. Children and young people are now more actively engaged in learning. They enjoy lessons more as teachers are meeting their learning needs more effectively and all activities have a clearer purpose. In lessons, children and young people now have more opportunities to choose activities and this is motivating them to engage in learning. Those with autism spectrum disorders feel less anxious as a result of the increased expertise of staff and more appropriate programmes of learning.

Children and young people are making much better progress in literacy and numeracy as all tasks and activities now have a much greater focus on what needs to be learned. Teachers have also improved the way they provide more opportunities for children to develop these skills in a range of subjects. Children and young people are making good progress in personal and social development and in the other curriculum areas. The school continues to celebrate well the achievements of children and young people in assemblies and by presenting certificates and trophies. Commendably, more young people's achievements are now being accredited by a number of external organisations such as Caledonian, John Muir and Saltire awards. In the senior phase, all young people are making good progress towards attaining Scottish Qualifications Authority personal development awards. A number are now working towards National 1, 2 and 3 awards. Together, these improved opportunities for accreditation will ensure that young people leave the school with a much better portfolio of awards.

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How well does the school support children and young people to develop and learn?

The headteacher and staff now provide much better support for children and young people and this is helping them to develop and learn. The headteacher consulted with stakeholders and increased the length of the school day to ensure that sufficient time is given to learning. The curriculum now has a clear rationale and much more effective programmes of learning. Staff use the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence well to plan lessons and track young people's progress. The school recognises the need to provide better opportunities for the younger children to play. The headteacher introduced major projects at the end of each term which enabled children and young people to learn together in different classes and have more enjoyable experiences. The senior phase is now more established and staff work more effectively with the school's partners. This is helping young people to connect their learning to life outside of school.

Throughout the school, lessons have improved as teachers consistently share the learning objectives with children and young people. Using this approach, teachers and pupil support assistants now work more effectively as a team. Each term, teachers update the baseline assessments and this provides helpful information on individuals' progress and their next steps in learning. Teachers use this information to plan more relevant tasks for young people and adjust them skilfully to meet individual learning needs. Teachers are communicating more consistently with children and young people and making better use of information and communications technology in class. The allied health professionals and teachers have produced very clear profiles of individual learners' needs and these have helped all staff to have a consistent approach to meeting their needs.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

The headteacher and staff have been very successful in improving the school. As a result of the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher, staff have evaluated well their classroom practice and put in place many changes which have improved the experiences and outcomes for children and young people. The headteacher has provided significant training for staff on the curriculum, learning and teaching and other topics. Staff benefited from very effective external training and consultancy on autism. As a result of these actions and the support provided by the headteacher, staff now have greater skills and a more professional approach to their work. Teachers have adopted leadership roles and are helping the school to improve in a number of areas. The good practice evident in the school needs to be fully embedded and widely shared by both teachers and pupil support assistants through observing and evaluating each other's work.

What happens next?

As a result of the outstanding progress made by the school as outlined in this letter, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, the Highland Council will inform parents about the school's progress.

Terry Carr HM Inspector

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