

Dunvegan Primary School and Nursery Class

Isle of Skye

The Highland Council

18 December 2007

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1. Background

Dunvegan Primary School and Nursery Classes were inspected in September 2007 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, Gaelic language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined the quality of the children's experience in the nursery, pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the village of Dunvegan and the surrounding area on the north-west of Skye. At the time of the inspection the roll was 80, including 12 children in the nursery classes. The headteacher was responsible for two other primary schools in the area. The

principal teacher also worked with the other two schools. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

Evaluations in this report, except where otherwise indicated, apply equally to the Gaelic-medium and English-medium classes.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- Staff interaction with children in the nursery classes to support and extend their learning.
- The provision for the development of Gaelic language in the Gaelic medium classes.
- Relationships and teamwork among staff.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents were positive about most aspects of the school. Parents of nursery children thought children enjoyed being at nursery and were treated fairly by staff. They felt that any concerns raised would be dealt with appropriately. Parents of primary pupils felt welcome within the school and were pleased with the care and concern shown by staff. A few were concerned about the standards set for pupils' attainment, the condition of the school building and how the school dealt with inappropriate behaviour. Pupils enjoyed school and thought teachers expected them to work hard. They felt teachers explained things clearly to them. Over half thought that the behaviour of other pupils was not good and expressed concerns about aspects of bullying. All staff enjoyed working in the school and thought there was regular discussion about how to achieve the school's priorities. They felt the school was well led.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. The school provided children in the nursery classes and pupils in the primary classes with a broad and balanced curriculum. The nursery environment was engaging and well organised. Children benefited from an appropriate range of activities. Staff took effective account of children's interests when planning activities. At the primary stages, additional time allocated to English language, Gaelic language and mathematics had helped raise attainment. Teachers frequently integrated

language skills across other parts of the curriculum, including environmental studies. At all stages, pupils benefited from taking part in enterprise activities. Staff made good use of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' experiences. School staff were not yet delivering two hours of quality physical education per week for all pupils, in line with national recommendations. Visiting teachers of music, physical education and art and design enhanced pupils' learning. Staff in the nursery classes supported individual children well and interacted effectively with them. They made appropriate use of praise to celebrate children's achievements. Staff were skilled in their use of questioning and dialogue to support and extend children's learning. Across the primary stages, the overall quality of teaching was good. Teachers were well organised and planned their lessons carefully. They gave clear instructions and directions and used questioning well to check pupils' understanding. In most lessons, teachers explained to pupils what they were going to learn, and used questioning to challenge pupils' thinking. This practice was not consistent across the school. Staff did not use information and communications technology (ICT) sufficiently well to enhance teaching in all curricular areas. Teachers set regular homework but it lacked variety.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was adequate. In the nursery classes, children responded positively to the learning environment. Most children were active, motivated and able to persevere to complete tasks. Children collaborated well to produce large pieces of creative work and worked independently to create junk models. A few experimented with different sounds of musical instruments and sang familiar songs. Children were beginning to develop their skills in using ICT by, for example, making small film clips using a digital video camera. Children were developing an appropriate range of physical skills but their skills in investigating and exploring were not well developed. In the primary classes, most pupils were hard working, responded well to adults and completed tasks without close supervision. At times, a minority did not engage well in classroom activities. Staff were not always successful in ensuring that the poor behaviour of a few pupils did not disrupt the learning of other pupils. When they had the opportunity to collaborate with others and be actively involved in their learning, pupils were motivated and enthusiastic. At P1 to P3, pupils were enthusiastic and cooperated well with each other when investigating the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Across the primary stages, the pace of learning and the experiences provided were not sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Pupils at the early stages were not sufficiently active in their learning, for example, through play.

The school took good steps to promote pupils' wider achievements. Children in the nursery classes were developing an awareness of the needs of others, and most were able to share resources and take turns. They were kind and caring towards one another and well behaved. Children were developing appropriate independence skills. In the primary classes, pupils at P6 and P7 were developing good personal skills through looking after younger pupils in the playground. The pupil council allowed pupils from P2 to P7 to develop their awareness of good citizenship by making recommendations for improvements around the school. Pupils developed their enterprise skills through a range of activities, including working in partnership with parents to produce a St Andrew's Day cookbook. Pupils at P4 to P7 had developed their skills in using ICT, and improved their creativity and teamwork by working with a professional film director to produce a film. A project involving art and music effectively encouraged pupils to practise speaking Gaelic with members of the community. An annual school concert, involving all pupils, helped them to work together and to gain

confidence in public performance. Those at P7 developed confidence, independence and self-esteem through participating in a residential trip involving other local primary schools.

English language

In the nursery classes, children were making very good progress in communication and language. They enjoyed listening to stories and used books to find information. Most were gaining an understanding of links between the written and spoken word. Most children were beginning to recognise their name. All children were able to use language confidently in talking to one another and to adults. Most were developing effective early writing skills in the writing area and in the home corner. Across the primary classes, the quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. Across the school, most pupils listened carefully to teachers and each other. They contributed well to class discussions and answered questions fully and effectively. Their skills in group discussion were not well developed. At all stages, pupils enjoyed reading for pleasure. They could identify their favourite author and key features of books they had read. At P7, most pupils were able to read fluently and with expression. They understood the main ideas of the text. At all stages, pupils wrote well for a variety of purposes. Overall, pupils did not always write at sufficient length. The presentation of written work was not of a consistently high standard.

Gaelic Language

In the nursery classes, children were making good progress in developing their skills in communication and language. They listened carefully to staff, showing understanding of what had been said. The children had learned simple Gaelic words and phrases and used these well when joining in games and singing rhymes. They were interested in looking at books and were encouraged to develop early writing skills within play activities. Across the P1 to P7 Gaelic classes, the quality of pupils' attainment in Gaelic language was good. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Pupils in P3 had attained these levels in writing earlier than might normally be expected. At all stages, pupils listened attentively to their teachers. They were making steady progress in acquiring oral skills in Gaelic. Their skills in talking collaboratively and to an audience required further development. In reading, pupils at P1 to P3 showed enjoyment of stories they had read. Those at P4 to P7 demonstrated a good understanding of texts. They did not yet read sufficiently widely using a range of sources, for example, poetry books and information texts. Pupils at P2 and P3 were developing effective skills in writing. At the upper stages, pupils wrote well about a range of topics and could identify key features within different forms of writing.

Mathematics

Children in the nursery classes were making good progress in early mathematics. They were able to sort and match by shape and colour. Children were developing an appropriate understanding of mathematical language. A few children could count and were beginning to recognise numbers. Children's skills in exploring mathematical concepts and problem solving in free-play situations were not well developed. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate

national levels of attainment. Most at the early stages, and a few at the upper stages, achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Overall, pupils with additional support needs were making appropriate progress with their classwork. Across the stages, pupils could interpret information from an appropriate range of graphs. Pupils at P7 were not yet competent in the use of spreadsheets or databases. Those at the early stages were making sound progress in learning to add and subtract. Across the school, pupils were developing good skills in mental calculation. Most pupils were developing a good understanding of money and measurement. A few pupils at P6 and P7 did not have a secure grasp of calculations involving fractions or decimals. At all stages, pupils had a good knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Those at P6 and P7 showed a clear understanding of angles. At all stages, pupils were developing appropriate strategies for solving problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Overall, the arrangements to meet pupils' learning needs were adequate. In the nursery classes, staff knew the children well and were responsive to their needs. They made effective use of observations of children at play to plan for the next stages in learning and record children's development and progress. Across the primary stages, activities and tasks were not always well matched to the needs of all pupils. As a result, higher achieving pupils were not always sufficiently challenged in their learning. The school had an effective approach to identifying pupils requiring additional support in their learning. Staff reviewed individualised educational programmes regularly and parents and pupils contributed to the development of these. The visiting support for learning teachers and other support staff worked closely with class teachers to provide support for pupils with identified needs. Their work was not always effectively managed to ensure that they were deployed well in all classes.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The quality of pastoral care was very good. All staff demonstrated care and concern for pupils' welfare. Staff in the nursery classes encouraged children to look after themselves. Policies were in place for child protection and staff were aware of their responsibilities. The school had appropriate procedures for the storage and administration of medicines. Guidelines and recording procedures were in place for dealing with any instances of bullying, and staff implemented them well. Pupils enjoyed being at school and knew what to do if they were upset. The school's health education programme included an appropriate emphasis on alcohol and substance misuse. In the nursery classes, children enjoyed healthy snacks and were involved in an oral health programme. Appropriate arrangements were in place

	for pupils entering P1 and for pupils at P7 transferring to Portree High School.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Climate and relationships were good. Staff had created an environment where all children and parents were made to feel welcome. Most pupils were friendly and well behaved. Staff did not consistently promote positive behaviour across the school. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and attainment were not consistently high. Nursery staff praised children appropriately to acknowledge their efforts and achievements, and to build self-esteem. The school recognised pupils' achievements in a range of appropriate ways. The school successfully promoted inclusion and equal opportunities for all pupils. Regular assemblies provided good opportunities for religious observance and enabled the school to celebrate pupils' achievements. Aspects of school programmes, including religious and moral education, helped promote positive attitudes to others and race equality. Further work was required to systematically develop pupils' skills in personal and social education.
Quality of accommodation and facilities	There were important weaknesses in the quality of the accommodation and facilities. The school had appropriately secure access to the main building and some external classrooms. Teachers made good use of the available teaching areas. Through use of attractive displays, staff had improved the appearance of the school and ensured a more stimulating learning environment for pupils. Pupils benefited from the use of an extensive playground. The use of the playing areas as a car park posed a potential hazard to pupils. Two classes were housed in temporary classrooms in the playground. These classrooms were in need of repair and had no access for users with restricted mobility. Pupils' toilets were in need of upgrading.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school's links with parents and the wider community were very good. A Parent Council had recently been formed. The school issued regular and informative newsletters that included helpful detail on class activities. Parents were informed about pupils' progress through helpful written reports, open afternoons and parent meetings. Good opportunities were available for parents of nursery children to meet with staff, both formally and informally, to discuss their children's progress. Curriculum workshops gave parents helpful information about the work of the school, including sensitive aspects of health education. Strong community involvement had enhanced pupils' learning experiences. Parents supported the school in a number of ways, including helping with school outings and fund-raising events. The chaplains made valuable contributions to the work of the school.

7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Dunvegan Primary School provided a welcoming and caring environment. Nursery staff interacted effectively with the children. Staff worked well as a team and had developed positive relationships with pupils. Parents and the community were very supportive of the school and contributed to many school activities. Levels of attainment in English language, Gaelic and mathematics were good. Teaching was good and in some instances it was very good. Overall, teaching and learning lacked consistency across the school and there were weaknesses in meeting the learning needs of all pupils. Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning were not always high enough.

The headteacher provided good leadership and had successfully led improvements to the curriculum in a number of areas, including health and environmental studies. She was highly committed to the school and its community, knew her staff and pupils well, and was respected by parents and staff. With the continuing support of the education authority, the headteacher and her staff had the capacity to improve the school. Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. The headteacher was supported by a recently appointed principal teacher. She had an appropriate remit, but she had not yet had time to have a significant impact on the work of the school. The headteacher had established adequate procedures for evaluating the work of the school. Across the primary stages, she monitored teachers' plans, observed classroom practice and sampled pupils' work. She gave useful feedback to staff on their teaching and discussed pupils' progress towards attainment targets. However, these procedures were not rigorous enough and were not impacting sufficiently on the quality of pupils' learning experiences or their attainment. The headteacher did not monitor the work of the nursery classes sufficiently systematically.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery classes there were two requirements and no recommendations. Both requirements had been addressed.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve attainment, learning and meeting needs. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- provide more regular opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning;
- meet pupils' learning needs more effectively;
- improve the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the nursery classes and school; and
- improve the condition of the pupils' toilets and ensure that vehicles cannot enter the playing areas when pupils are present.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Janie McManus
HM Inspector
18 December 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in Gaelic language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good
How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate
How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	weak
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the Parent Council, and the community	very good
Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

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

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<p>What parents thought the school did well</p>	<p>What parents think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of children. ● Staff made them feel welcome in school. ● They thought their children enjoyed being at school and found the work stimulating and challenging. ● School reports gave helpful information about their children's progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A few did not feel the school set high standards for attainment. ● A few wanted more information about their children's strengths and weaknesses. ● Deal more effectively with inappropriate behaviour.
<p>What pupils thought the school did well</p>	<p>What pupils think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers told them how they were getting on with their work and helped them when they were having difficulties in learning. ● Teachers checked their homework. ● They knew what to do if they were upset. ● They had a say in deciding how to make the school better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less than half of pupils believed that pupils' behaviour was good. ● Around a quarter felt that staff were not good at dealing with bullying.
<p>What staff thought the school did well</p>	<p>What staff think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All felt that staff communicated well with each other and the school was well led. ● All staff enjoyed working in the school and felt they worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community. ● All staff believed that the school communicated clearly to parents the standard of work expected from pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

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Footnotes

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