



***Follow-through Inspection of Minard
Primary School, Argyll and Bute***

Argyll and Bute Council

Community Services: Education

Follow-through Inspection of Minard Primary School

1. The Inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on standards and quality in Minard Primary School in November 2001. Working with the school, the education authority prepared and made public an Action Plan in November 2001, indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

New arrangements have been introduced for the follow-through inspection process. As a result of the school's high performance and the very effective leadership, identified in the HMIE inspection of the school, responsibility for preparing the progress report for parents and carers has been passed to the education authority. Members of the education authority's Quality Improvement Team visited the school prior to publication of this report to carry out a follow-through inspection. This visit assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

Under the very effective leadership of the head teacher, and with the commitment and teamwork of all staff, the school had continued to improve in key areas of its work.

There was a very positive ethos within the school. The head teacher and staff continued to work hard to maintain very good relationships with the pupils, who in turn had developed a sense of responsibility for their own learning and the life of the school.

Continuing good practice and ongoing development was evident in English language and mathematics. Commercial schemes of work were being successfully integrated with innovative methods of teaching. This provided the pupils with opportunities to discuss and research particular themes and to reflect on the work they produced.

The head teacher was also developing ways of making more use of the school grounds. A reading and story-telling area was to be established in an identified part of the grounds. This was the result of discussions with the pupils, who had requested an open-air library with benches in a quiet area of the grounds overlooking the adjacent loch.

The school continues to place a strong emphasis on teamwork. All staff are involved in the life of the school and contribute effectively to the school's policy on encouraging a caring and nurturing environment.

3. Progress towards the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in November 2001 identified three main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 *The education authority should address the accommodation issues identified in the report.*

The education authority had installed a gate at the entrance to the school grounds. The gate prevented pupils from running directly onto the pavement adjoining the main road. In addition, the school had introduced and discussed additional rules to ensure that the pupils were aware of the potential dangers of congregating around the gate or climbing on it.

3.2 *The school should continue to provide more challenge and a faster pace of learning for higher-achieving pupils.*

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

In both mathematics and English language, most pupils were achieving well above national levels.

The head teacher, in full consultation with staff, had established a number of approaches to offer higher-achieving pupils a wider range of activities and ensure a faster pace of learning. Commendably, the head teacher acknowledged the benefits of introducing suitable and creative learning activities alongside established commercial schemes of work.

In particular, the length of time spent on practice examples and jotter work in mathematics had been reduced and replaced by problem solving, timed challenges and oral work. This provided the pupils with more challenging and interactive learning opportunities.

A paired reading scheme had been introduced to further improve reading skills. This provided a wide range of challenging reading materials which the pupils were then encouraged to discuss with each other.

The pupils' evaluation of play-scripts for the annual show, provided further evidence of innovative methods of challenge and a faster pace of learning.

Pupils in P6 and P7 had been given individual responsibility for cataloguing, classifying and recording reviews of the library books. With valuable support from the classroom assistant, an effective home-reading scheme had become firmly established.

The head teacher had placed great importance on nurturing enjoyment in reading. Story-telling sessions by senior pupils to younger ones had generated much enthusiasm across the school. This was enhanced by the pupils' design and construction of a wooden 'story-teller throne'.

3.3 *The school should improve still further the range, variety and frequency of homework activities across more areas of the curriculum.*

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The head teacher had consulted with parents and pupils about arrangement for homework. A full range of views had been compiled, providing the head teacher and her staff with information that assisted in improving homework activities.

The updated policy took account of these views and explained the importance of homework. Homework tasks were varied, interesting and suited to the pupils' abilities. The management of homework was supported by teaching relevant study skills and the use of a homework diary.

There was continuous discussion between staff and pupils on homework issues through the pupil council.

4. Conclusion

The school, with the support of the education authority, has made very good progress in addressing all of the main points for action contained in the report of November 2001.

Community Services : Education will continue to monitor the work of the school as part of its procedures for ensuring quality.

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