



Educational Services

HMIe Inspection

Progress Report on Portknockie Primary School

May 2006

Report to HMIe on the extent to which the school's work has improved in response to the main points for action in the HMIE report published on 26 October 2004, and the extent to which the school has developed its capacity to secure continuous improvement in the future.

Evidence: The Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) has undertaken progress meetings with the headteacher and interviewed class teachers. The QIO observed lessons in mathematics, writing, reading, circle time, science, drama and support for learning. Learning and Teaching Officers (LTO), tested pupils from P5 and P7 in reading, writing and mathematics, examined pupils' in mental mathematics in P2, P5 and P7 and problem solving in P5 and P7 and examined samples of pupils' work. The QIO has studied documentary evidence including policies and programmes of study, minutes of meetings, progress reports, and pupil attainment and tracking records, classroom observation records and parental evaluations.

MAIN POINT FOR ACTION – *'Improve the curriculum'*.

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

Scottish Heinemann Maths scheme has been introduced across the school and an emphasis has been put on mental strategies, measurement and problem solving. A reading record has been introduced and a wider range of fiction is now available to pupils in the school. The school has introduced a weekly timetable in order to develop consistency of coverage across the school and to improve breadth and balance. The headteacher monitors teachers' planning to ensure that breadth and balance are maintained. Flexible time is focused on each class's needs during each term in agreement with the headteacher. The headteacher comments on these plans and provides this feedback to the staff. An RME programme of work has been developed and 'The Borders Art Pack' has been purchased. The delivery of RME in the school is now more structured, and with links to art and drama, and according to the headteacher, this has led to a more stimulating and motivating experience for pupils. Pupils are given opportunities to share their work at whole school assemblies and pupils have responded positively. As a result

of improvements to the PSD curriculum pupils are now more aware of issues like bullying and peer pressure and how to deal with them. The formation and operation of the Pupil Council incorporating Eco-school committee has given pupils development opportunities in citizenship and enterprise education. The school has made progress in improving pupils' use of information and communications technology to support and extend their learning through the use of websites, digital cameras and with the introduction of software to support the Scottish Heinemann Mathematics programme. Through the Heinemann software pupils are given some exposure in the use of databases and graphs and charts. The school has also developed a website (eBoard) where school information and curricular content through websites are made available to parents and pupils. The improvements to the curriculum have begun to impact in the school, but more time is required to embed impact more fully across the school.

MAIN POINT FOR ACTION – ‘*Improve aspects of teaching*’.

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

Revised forward planning formats and daily planning diaries have been introduced. Staff have been involved in staff development related to learning and teaching over the past year. All staff have had the opportunity for training in formative assessment techniques while almost all staff have had staff development in reciprocal teaching of reading, mental maths and problem solving. One member of staff has undertaken training in Cognitive Accelerated Mathematical Education (CAME). A Quality Improvement Officer recently observed that, in most of the classes observed learning intentions were shared with pupils, explanations and instructions were clear and at an appropriate level and praise was used effectively. In a few lessons there was very good use of formative assessment techniques, building on previous work, giving good quality feedback and setting high expectations. In all lessons there were very good relationships between staff and pupils. Good examples of developing mental agility were seen in two classes. Another lesson observed involved a Cognitive Accelerated Mathematical Education (CAME) lesson and pupils responded well to this approach.

Improvements have taken place within mathematics with a clearer emphasis on mental strategies, problem solving and measurement. During a recent visit by a Learning and Teaching Officer (Numeracy), the majority of pupils were able to explain clearly what mental strategies they used and were at an appropriate level for their developmental stage. In problem solving pupils were able to explain to others how they solved a problem but lacked the necessary vocabulary to discuss problem solving in terms of strategies and hence be able to transfer strategies from one context to another. The Learning and Teaching Officer tested small groups of pupils from P5 and P7 at their most recent levels attained and found that not all pupils were secure at these levels.

In reading, the school has made good progress to ensure that pupils have access to a wider range of fiction and other material. Pupils require more guidance on factors to take into account when choosing books from the library. There should be more interaction with pupils to gauge and improve comprehension through questioning and discussion.

Reciprocal reading practices have been introduced in the school and this will be carried forward in an action plan during 2006 – 07.

In writing, the school has areas of strength. Pupils have written for a variety of purposes and made good use of planning sheets to support tasks. The sharing of learning intentions and success criteria with quality feedback consistently applied across the school would further improve the teaching of writing in the school.

The school has introduced “Let’s Think” in P1/2 and this is giving pupils opportunities to use enquiry skills and predict outcomes. The school has improved pupils’ opportunities to use ICT but recognises that further development in its use of ICT to support pupils’ learning is required.

Homework is now linked to maths, reading and topic work and is more varied and designed to extend learning.

MAIN POINT FOR ACTION – ‘Ensure that pupils needs are met’

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

A Behaviour and Discipline Policy has been put in place following consultation. This policy was commended by the Inclusion Support Manager who monitored these policies in schools. A successful event for parents was held to deal with issues such as bullying and this was very well received. The school has dealt well with any issues of bullying.

More rigour has been introduced to liaison between class teachers and the support for learning staff. Time is set aside on a termly basis for consultation in order to decide the planning and resourcing. Support for learning is delivered through individual and group withdrawal, setting in mathematics and in-class support for writing groups in the early years and in the upper stages. The headteacher and support for learning teacher attended training on the Additional Support for Learning Act.

The support for learning teacher makes use of ICT to support pupils in language and mathematics. While ICT resources are limited, use is made of word processing with predictive text to support pupils with language difficulties and software like Wordshark and Numbershark are also used.

High attaining pupils were provided with novels beyond level E and pupils working at level E mathematics were challenged by Challenges in Maths (Level E). Setting in mathematics also allowed high achieving pupil to progress more quickly with one primary 4 pupil in a mathematics set with P5, 6 and 7.

The school has provided good support to one pupil with behavioural difficulties with the help of an outreach worker from Central Services. The school has accessed alternative curricular activities for this pupil. The school also liaised with Social Work to secure a sessional worker in order to provide additional support to the pupil and worked very closely with the pupil’s carer in order to keep the pupil at the school and maximise

educational provision and support.

A breakfast club has been introduced and provides very good support to a group of children. This has improved their attendance as well as improving their punctuality.

A 'Community Task Force' involving 14 pupils from two age groups has been established with the intention of improving their self esteem through some of the tasks carried out in the community.

MAIN POINT FOR ACTION – *'establish appropriate arrangements for monitoring and self-evaluation'*

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

The school now follows authority guidelines on self-evaluation. All staff are involved in the self-evaluation process using How Good is Our School quality indicators. The views from parents and pupils are taken into account. The Pupil Council plays a role in the process by providing feedback on any new initiatives in the school, offering suggestions for any other improvements and by considering the suggestions made by classes through their suggestion boxes. The school produced a detailed audit in June 2005 which informed the Standards and Quality Report and established priorities for improvement. Procedures have been further improved in the preparation of the 2006-07 improvement plan. The broad brush audit for 2006 has been completed using the 6 point scale. Improvement priorities have been decided upon. They are:

- Linking reading to writing
- MLPS Programme of Work
- Developing Eco-schools to achieve a green flag award
- Associated School Group priorities – CAME, Reciprocal Teaching, Assessment is for Learning

A Curriculum for Excellence will be a strand through all priorities.

The headteacher has introduced monitoring of teachers' planning, classroom observation and provides feedback to staff. Records are kept of monitoring activity. Staff are issued with a monitoring calendar with a particular focus each term. The school sets attainment targets for pupils, making use of previous performance and also baseline assessment data (PiPs) and this information is shared and discussed with class teachers. Pupil attainment is then monitored throughout the year to ensure appropriate progress and intervention when appropriate.

The school now carries out staff review for teaching and non-teaching staff as part of the authority's staff review and development schemes.

MAIN POINT FOR ACTION – ‘attend to the accommodation and resource issues contained in the report’

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

A door-entry security system is now in place. Emergency lights have not been installed at fire exits but may be in future when other building works take place in the school. The school has updated learning resources for reading, mathematics, PSD and topic boxes. This updating of resources will continue as funds permit.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Attainment

	Reading				Writing				Mathematics			
	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006 Est	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006 Est	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006 Est
School	87%	86%	69%	87%	67%	76%	67%	71%	70%	86%	87%	82%
Moray	78%	84%	83%		69%	78%	78%		77%	84%	84%	
Scotland	81%	81%			73%	74%			80%	80%		

Attainment in reading is static with a dip in 2005, partially affected by testing later than the deadline set by the authority for collecting 5-14 data from schools. The school has taken positive steps to broaden pupils’ reading experiences.

Attainment in writing has remained steady over a period but has been below the authority average. There are areas of strength in the teaching of writing in the school with children given the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes. Good planning sheets support the tasks set for children

Attainment in mathematics has also remained steady and was above the authority average in 2004 and 2005. The school’s focus on mental maths and problem solving, along with the introduction of Scottish Heinemann Mathematics and associated guidance should enable the school to improve children’s progress in mathematics.

Testing is taking place more regularly during the year and staff are aware of testing procedures, however, the next step for the school should be to put in place a moderation process to ensure consistency in the application of standards.

A number of school developments, formative assessment, reciprocal reading, CAME mathematics and the improved monitoring of learning and teaching, should impact positively on language and mathematics.

Leadership and Self-evaluation

The headteacher has a clear vision and strategic direction for the school. In her time in post she has moved the school forward in a number of ways. She has developed a number of essential policies, improved the curriculum, addressed staff review and put systems in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Inheriting challenges with the school budget, she has addressed the issue and has overturned the previous overspend. She has ensured that the staff are kept aware of development opportunities and has now reached the stage where almost all staff attend staff development courses linked to school improvement. The school has been awarded a bronze Eco-school award and has made improvements to the playground including games on the tarmac.

The school has undergone rapid change over the past two years and this has had some impact on staff relationships at certain periods during that time due to some staff resistance to the changes. Staffing has also impacted on continuity but the appointment of a principal teacher in the autumn and the presence of a very capable newly qualified teacher has generated some enthusiasm for change and help build sounder teamwork in the school. The school would benefit from a period of consolidation both in staffing and in terms of the improvements put in place to ensure maximum impact.

Conclusion

Overall the school has made good progress in responding to the main points for action in the original report. The Education Authority has confidence in the school's on-going commitment to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It takes the view that the headteacher and almost all staff are fully committed to improving pupils' experiences in the school.