



**Kinlochleven High School
The Highland Council
20 April 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, young people and the local community know whether their school provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities which young people are involved in. We also gather the views of young people, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well young people are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and young people work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support young people. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from young people, parents and staff, and details about young people's examination performance. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals. Where applicable there will also be a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

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

Kinlochleven High School is a non-denominational school which serves Kinlochleven and a wide rural area of Lochaber. The roll was 143 when the inspection was carried out in February 2010. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The quality of young people's learning experiences and achievement.
- Very positive relationships in the school community.
- The work done by staff to improve their practice and support young people's learning.
- High-quality leadership by the headteacher with the support of the depute headteacher and principal teachers.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all young people are motivated, have positive attitudes, and engage fully in their learning. They work well independently and in groups. They benefit from the positive learning environment established by teachers. They use information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to support their learning. Across a range of subjects, young people are beginning to take more responsibility for their own progress. They are clear about the purposes of almost all lessons. Detailed, useful feedback from staff helps them to develop a clear idea of what they are good at and where they can improve. Almost all young people feel they are safe and well cared for. They show confidence in their own abilities in almost all situations.

Young people achieve success and develop a range of skills through a wide variety of out-of-class activities. Some individual young people and groups achieve very highly, particularly in sport. Currently the girls' shinty team are Scottish schools' champions. Young people's teamworking, creativity and sense of responsibility are developing very

well from the S1 outward bound course through to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award undertaken by all in S3. All young people in S3 also benefit from the Ocean Youth Trust programme. A large number of young people take key roles in the school show, and take part in frequent offsite trips, including an S6 trip to Europe. Senior pupils develop their sense of responsibility through acting as house captains and prefects. They also act as paired readers supporting junior pupils. Younger pupils need more opportunities to develop responsibilities. The school has made a good start to tracking and monitoring young people's overall achievement.

Young people progress well from levels of attainment in primary school. By the end of S2, the majority of young people reach appropriate national levels in reading. Just under half reach them in writing and mathematics. Almost all young people have effective skills in listening and talking. Attainment by the end of S4 has been improving and is now very high, and above national averages. Young people continue to attain highly in S5 and S6. The school monitors the progress of young people very carefully from the end of S3 onwards.

Curriculum and meeting needs

The school roll is very small and has a large number of single-teacher departments. Despite this, the curriculum provides young people with a very wide range of subjects from S1/S2 through to senior school. There are well-established opportunities to enhance young people's wider achievements. Young people in S3 to S6 have the opportunity to follow a range of vocational courses through effective links with Lochaber College. Progression within these courses is available. All young people in S3 benefit from a week's work experience. Young people in S6 can study a very wide range of Advanced Higher courses along with other courses offered through distance learning. The school has improved its transition policy with its associated primary schools. Links with a few subjects are now very strong. Young people leaving school are very well supported to secure positive destinations. The school has clear plans for how it will implement *Curriculum for Excellence*. It is developing its approach to providing topics which link

learning across a number of subjects, and has planned a new timetable structure. Young people in S3, and beyond, do not access the national expectation of two hours of physical education each week. Too little time is allocated to religious and moral education at all stages.

All staff know young people very well and give them effective support. Teachers plan relevant activities to meet young people's learning needs. In most cases, activities are varied and give young people different ways to succeed. Staff make very effective use of the wide range of high-quality resources to support young people's learning, including ICT and specialised technology. All staff involve young people well in agreeing what they need to do next. Young people with additional support needs are helped to make appropriate decisions about their individual programmes. Almost all are motivated by improving reading and spelling skills. Staff from various specialist agencies work very effectively with school support staff. Together, they make sure that young people and their families can access the services they need. They help young people to overcome concerns related to health issues, changes in family circumstances, and any problems with behaviour, attendance or self esteem. Support for young people with dyslexia, and for those who might leave school without having a clear, positive destination to go to, is outstanding.

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

The school is very much at the heart of its community, and has very strong links with it. Staff make sure that they communicate well with parents about their children's progress and needs. They do this through formal reports and by text messaging. Parents know how sensitive topics to do with health and relationships will be taught. They find it very easy to approach the school if they have any concerns. They hardly ever have to use the formal complaints system. A number of parents support school out-of-hours activities. The Parent Teachers and Friends Forum have assisted with the funding of school trips.

The school has very effective links with a range of agencies which help young people who need additional support, including those about to leave school. There are close links with community learning and organisations including the Ice Factor, Eden Court and Lochaber College. These links help provide a wide range of opportunities for young people and prepare them for life after school. Health partners, including the school's catering staff, help young people learn about healthy and active lifestyles.

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

All staff are working to improve the school. They observe each other's lessons, make good use of new ideas and good practice. Almost all are involved in working groups to improve young people's learning, or to develop *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are widening the range of opportunities for young people to achieve success. Young people across the school, and particularly those at the senior stages, contribute well to developing a strong sense of community. A few young people are using their skills and knowledge in dance and shinty to work as volunteers with a younger age group. Staff gather the views of young people about their experiences and the quality of their learning. The pupil council does not have a clear role in improving the school.

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

There are very positive relationships and a strong sense of mutual respect between almost all members of the school community and with visitors. Young people are very polite. They share the staff's high expectations for behaviour and achievement. Staff are clear on how to keep young people safe, and they successfully promote choices which support a healthy lifestyle. Young people are treated fairly and all are fully included in the life of the school.

The school could do more to make them aware of different cultures. There are not enough opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher has been in post for less than three years. In that time he has had a major, positive impact on the school. He has made key improvements to young people's achievements, and developed strong links with parents and the community. He has established a clear sense of purpose for the school. In all his work, he has made sure that staff and young people are fully involved in improvements. All are very supportive of his work. The experienced depute headteacher works very effectively with the headteacher. Together, senior managers and staff are working successfully to make sure that young people's learning, and their overall achievement, are as good as they can be.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its school.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Ensure that young people are more involved in improving their own learning.
- Monitor the progress of young people systematically at all stages.

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 HMIE 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.

Here are the evaluations for Kinlochleven High School.

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Brian Stewart
20 April 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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