



PAIRC SCHOOL
Isle of Lewis

Progress Report

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Contents

1. Introduction

2. How well do young people learn and achieve?

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

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

5. Conclusion

1. Introduction

In December 2013, HM Inspectors published a report on Pairc School. The school was re-visited in November 2014 by the Director and two Senior Education Officers from the Education and Children's Services Department and a progress report was forwarded to HM Inspectors. In January 2015, HM Inspectors provided parents/carers with a letter informing them of how the school was improving. HM Inspectors requested that the Comhairle provide a further report of progress in October 2015.

Since the original inspection, the school has undergone a number of staffing changes. A new head teacher was appointed in January 2015 and new class teachers in Gaelic medium and English medium (upper primary) commenced duties in August 2015.

In September 2015, two Senior Education Officers from the Education and Children's Services Department visited Pairc to review progress.

During this visit, which focused on progress with the action points identified in the original report, officers heard from the head teacher and staff how the school had continued to improve. The officers also talked to children, observed lessons and sampled children's work. This report describes progress made by the school since November 2014.

2. How well do young people learn and achieve?

During the latter terms of the last school session, the head teacher provided the former Gaelic medium teacher with helpful advice and guidance to improve overall planning of children's learning. There was a specific focus on the development and progression of children's language and literacy skills in order to provide a continuum of learning. The head teacher also worked with the teacher in a team-teaching capacity, to model the delivery of specific lessons. Links between the Gaelic medium classes in Sgoil na Pàirc and Sgoil nan Loch were strengthened, which provided an opportunity for the teachers to engage in collaborative planning and team teaching. This good practice has continued this session. The children from Sgoil na Pàirc benefited from the experience of working with their peer group and engaging in group activities which helped to develop their communication skills in Gaelic. There is now more structure to the teaching of reading and writing through implementation of programmes to ensure progression in the teaching of phonics, spelling and grammar. The newly appointed Gaelic medium probationer teacher is providing children with more active and engaging learning experiences. The school has invested in new resources to support the development of children's oral Gaelic skills. The children demonstrate increasing confidence and fluency in Gaelic through participation in daily singing and drama sessions. Recent staff training on a new approach to teaching phonics is being adapted for implementation in Gaelic medium classes.

Across the stages, almost all children are motivated in their learning, enriched by relevant meaningful activities. Examples include letters written to a local fish farmer inviting him to the school to share his experiences with the children and a visit from the owner of the local Salt Factory. These visits introduce children to different jobs in the community and the skills needed for these.

Work sampling indicated that children were writing in a variety of genres, from the earliest stages and there was evidence of differentiation within the composite classes. There was clear evidence, at the early stages, of learners self-evaluating using traffic-lighting. At all stages, there was evidence of teachers' feedback linked to clear success criteria. Next steps in learning for extended writing should be more challenging for the very able learners.

Children at the English Medium early stages were attentive and focused on their learning of phonics, with the incorporation of Gaelic and pupil-led learning, supported by the teacher's very effective school-home support links. At the English Medium upper stages in Mathematics, children were engaged and motivated and the pace of learning was brisk, with varied activities, including collaborative learning and appropriate challenge for the very able learners. Children had frequent opportunities to discuss their learning, resulting in clearer understanding and confidence when tackling mathematical tasks.

Children engage well with tasks and activities which are better matched to their abilities and interests. For example, differentiated daily maths challenges, children leading the learning in mathematics, timed tasks, provision of appropriate extension work in English medium upper primary classes, paired problem solving in Gaelic medium, effective use of the smartboard to support the teaching of phonics in P1-3.

Staff continue to work in partnership with a range of organisations to provide real and relevant learning opportunities. For example, when learning about Louis Braille, children in P1-4 were visited by a teacher and visually impaired pupil from the sensory impairment unit, to share their experiences of school life. Outdoor education was enhanced through an orienteering programme supported by Active Schools. The children also visited the Islands Book Trust to listen to the author Mairi Hedderwick outlining how her story developed from book to TV series. Teachers continue to seek opportunities to increase children's engagement in a range of activities. Children's wider achievements are recognised and celebrated. The school should now track and monitor children's involvement in these activities to ensure they all achieve as highly as possible. A new partnership between the school and the local community Muaitheabhal Trust, will involve the children in exploring the natural environment surrounding the school.

Across the school, children are continuing to develop their skills as reflective learners who enjoy discussing and using the language of learning. Reflective comments are recorded in Learning Logs, on a weekly basis, by all children. Children at all stages spoke enthusiastically about what they were learning in science using appropriate scientific language linked to the study of plant growth. Children at the upper stages explained how sharing the purpose and success criteria of lessons helped them to succeed.

They are developing a better understanding of their strengths and aspects for improvement. Staff should now support children to identify what the next steps in learning will be at the end of numeracy/mathematics lessons.

Transitions at all stages have been strengthened through collaborative planning and cross sector/stage working. Nursery children and other pre-school children from the area joined their prospective P1-3 class on a weekly basis during terms 3 and 4, where they engaged in joint differentiated fairy tale activities and familiarised themselves with the primary classroom. The "Snow White" story was used as a stimulus for planning a variety of interesting activities for the children. P7 children also spent time in the Nicolson Institute to familiarise themselves with the secondary school and gain opportunities to learn in this new environment. They also had the opportunity to meet children from other rural schools at an orienteering transition event. Transition work has been further developed at the middle stages and the P4 children regularly to work with the children in P5-7. This has helped to build children's confidence in working with others. These transition events and activities, provided teachers with additional information to further improve progression and build on children's learning.

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

The head teacher and her staff are building productive relationships between the school and its families. Children who had not accessed local nursery provision joined other pre school children for transition events. A workshop for parents of children entering P1 provided them with information to enable them to support children's reading. Parents with children in Gaelic medium have been provided with information on how they can support their children's learning at home.

Currently the school is developing its approaches to tracking children's progress through Curriculum for Excellence levels. Staff are implementing local authority systems and processes to monitor and record children's progress. Teachers have a very good awareness of the needs of children in their classes. They are working together to make better use of assessment information to inform the planning of children's learning to ensure they all achieve as highly as possible. Each term the head teacher meets with individual class teachers to discuss plans for learning and pupils' progress. All teachers use the significant aspects of learning and progression frameworks to plan lessons. Improved planning and monitoring, deployment of resources and appropriate training has resulted in individual children's needs being met more effectively.

Further progress has been made improving children's curricular experiences. In the Gaelic medium classes, children are experiencing a richer curriculum which is more engaging and less resource driven. Implementation of Language Learning: A 1+2 approach, has been identified as a priority for action in the school improvement plan in order to increase all children's confidence in using Gaelic. Across the school children are beginning to use Gaelic more frequently across the curriculum. Staff are also focusing on improving mathematics learning and teaching through engagement in professional discussions, attendance at training events and collaboration with other schools.

There are very good examples of teachers helping children make meaningful links in learning through motivating topics and projects. Children in the P1-4 class were introduced to *Isaac the Superhero* when applying their knowledge and understanding of measurement to solve a real life problem through investigation. The local area and contexts which the children can relate to, such as a visit to the 'Katie Morag' exhibition, planting vegetables and cooking them, are used to make learning meaningful.

Planning across early level is being developed through weekly visits by the P1-3 class teacher to the local nursery, to ensure children's learning progresses well from nursery into P1.

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

The newly appointed Headteacher has continued to build on the good work of the acting Headteacher. She has involved staff in whole school self evaluation identifying priorities and pathways to improvement. She has taken some effective steps to improve planning for learning by revising exemplar materials shared nationally. The current teachers are all highly reflective and all staff continue to work very well together as a team. Staff in Sgoil na Pàirc, work well with colleagues from other schools to share practice in learning and teaching approaches and assessment. These meetings enable staff to liaise with other teachers working at the same stage; to share an understanding of standards expected; to help to raise expectations and ensure consistency across schools. This collaborative approach continues with a focus on assessment and moderation of mathematics. Teachers relayed in their professional dialogue that their confidence in their use of assessment approaches has improved.

Staff take on lead roles within the improvement agenda and are keen to support further developments. For example the P1-3 teacher is supporting staff in the nursery with planning and is taking a lead on improving mathematics, the P-7 English medium teacher provides a lead on language learning and the teacher providing reduced class contact cover, leads improvements to the science programme. The Gaelic medium teacher is supporting her colleagues with the development of Gaelic as L2 across the school.

Staff continue to bring about improvements to the quality of children's learning experiences, the curriculum and self evaluation. They have demonstrated a clear commitment to improving aspects of the school's work.