



**Castlehill Primary School
Campbeltown
Argyll and Bute Council
14 September 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² 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 in which children are involved. We also gather the views of children, 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 children 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 children 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 children. 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 children, parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

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

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Castlehill Primary School is a non-denominational school. It is in Campbeltown and serves part of the town, the Sound of Kintyre and rural area towards Southend. The roll was 227 when the inspection was carried out in June 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Confident and well-behaved children.
- The way children are actively involved in their learning.
- Children's wider achievements.
- Strong and caring relationships across the school and the way all children are enabled to succeed.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are confident and enthusiastic about their learning. They enjoy tasks and lessons that allow them to be more actively involved as learners. They are becoming skilled at working in pairs and small groups. Almost all children work well independently. They are taking more responsibility for their learning through personal learning planning. Children are safe and happy at school. They are respectful of staff and each other and they encourage each other to behave well. A few children are not yet clear enough about their next steps in learning.

Almost all children achieve success in a wide range of activities after school and at lunchtime. Children at P6 and P7 are developing leadership skills by running lunchtime clubs for younger children. The clubs include 'Dance Mania', art clubs and sports activities. Children are developing musical and performance skills through instrumental tuition and taking part in school choirs. Children have a good awareness of other people's needs through the many fundraising and charity activities they support. At P6, children are developing good science skills in their topic on wind turbines. They speak confidently

about the benefits of wind turbines for the local economy and environment. At the early stages, children have a good understanding of animals and plants in local woodland through their forest explorers topic. The small number of children with significant additional support needs are making good progress in their personal and social development.

Across the school, almost all children are progressing well in listening, talking and reading and progress very well in mathematics. Almost all achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and mathematics and most do so in writing. A significant number achieve these levels earlier than might normally be expected, but this is not always maintained as children move up through later stages. Children with complex additional support needs are making very good progress in language and communication. Attainment in reading and mathematics has improved slightly in recent years, but there is no clear trend in attainment in writing. In writing, children do not have enough opportunities to write at length. Writing standards are not consistently high across all areas of learning. Almost all children listen well to the teacher and each other. They take part effectively in discussions and present their ideas well to others during lessons. Almost all children show good skills in reading for information and have a good understanding of the texts they read. In mathematics, children are developing speed and accuracy in mental and written calculations. Almost all are able to describe their thinking in solving problems.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children benefit from a broad range of experiences which are planned, taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The experiences which are planned for children take good account of their additional support needs, especially those with autism spectrum disorders. Staff are planning learning experiences, including literacy and numeracy, across different areas of learning. Children benefit from making choices about their learning based upon their own interests. When staff plan learning across different areas, they are not always clear which skills

children are developing. Staff are not, therefore, clear how children will build on their skills as they progress through the school. All children benefit from at least two hours of good quality physical education each week.

Across the school, most tasks and learning activities are set at the right level of difficulty. In almost all classes, a few children need tasks which will extend their learning further. The school has a small number of children with more complex additional support needs arising from a number of factors. These children are very well supported and benefit from well prepared support plans, and coordinated support plans where appropriate. Staff know all children very well and are sensitive to their needs. Teachers give clear explanations to children about what they are learning. Children enjoy the active approaches to learning across the school. Area network support teachers provide skilled support across the school. Support staff provide high quality support to individual children. Teachers provide regular home learning activities that are varied and interesting.

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

The headteacher and staff work very well with parents to support children's learning. The school communicates with parents regularly through parents' evenings, written reports and newsletters. The school also holds well organised review meetings for the children who require this level of planning and support. The school works closely with the supportive Parent Council who help identify the school's priorities for improvement. The very active parent teacher association has raised significant funds to support children's wider achievements across the school. Parents are kept informed about sensitive aspects of relationships and health education. Any complaints or concerns raised by parents are dealt with effectively by staff. The school, has very good links with the local community. They use the community well to apply children's learning in real-life situations. Links with the local nursery and secondary school are strong. Arrangements for

children to move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Campbeltown Grammar School are very well organised.

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

Children are very proud of their school and take responsibility very well within the school. For example, children at P7 promote positive play for children at P1 to P3. Children's views are sought and acted upon in a variety of ways, including the pupil council, eco committee and suggestion box. The pupil council, which involves children from P3 to P7, has improved playground games and helped secure a grant to build the activity trail in the school grounds. The school is working towards achieving a third green flag in the Eco-Schools Scotland awards. The senior management team use a range of approaches to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. They check children's progress and their written work. They also carry out classroom observations and check teachers' planning. This does not always lead to clear steps for improvement or better attainment, especially in children's writing. The school involves parents and partners well in identifying the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers reflect on their own teaching and share good practice. The priorities identified in the school improvement plan have led to better quality learning and teaching.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

The school has high expectations of what children can learn and achieve. Almost all children respond very well to these expectations. Children's behaviour is also very good and in line with staff expectations. Relationships between staff and children are very caring and supportive. The school has good arrangements in place to ensure children are kept safe. The school encourages children to make healthy choices, for example the school provides free fresh fruit every day to all children. Children learn about equality and about different

beliefs and cultures in their health and wellbeing programme and in religious and moral education. The school is very good at ensuring all children are able to take part and succeed, especially those with significant additional support needs. Religious observance is a regular feature of school life. The school chaplain supports the school's religious observance and is well known to staff and children.

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

The experienced headteacher knows the school very well and gives it a clear sense of direction. The school aims to put children at the centre of everything they do. The headteacher and depute headteacher are successful in achieving this aim. Children's learning experiences and wider achievements are strong and the quality of teaching is high. The depute headteacher is leading developments at the early stages very well, especially active approaches to learning. The principal teachers lead aspects of the school improvement plan well, within the limited time available. Across the school, teachers take responsibility for improving learning and teaching. The school is well placed to continue improving.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

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

- Improve attainment in writing.
- Continue to develop *Curriculum for Excellence* and check that children are making progress across different areas of learning.
- Ensure that tasks and activities provide all children with sufficient challenge.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. 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 and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Castlehill Primary School.

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Douglas Hutchison
14 September 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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Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600 236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Where the school has a nursery class, you can contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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