



**Sgoil Lionacleit
Benbecula
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
9 June 2009**

We published a report on Sgoil Lionacleit in June 2006. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out a follow-through inspection in February 2008 and published a report on that visit in June 2008.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in March 2009. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping young people to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well young people are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

Sgoil Lionacleit serves the islands of Berneray, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay. At the time of this follow-through inspection, the headteacher had been absent through ill health for some months. A depute headteacher was acting as headteacher.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- A broad and well-balanced curriculum for young people, including the provision of vocational courses.
- Young people's broader achievements which are promoted effectively by the school.
- The commitment of staff in supporting young people.
- High standards of young people's behaviour.

3. Example of good practice

- The recently-introduced crofting course.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

The school continues to provide a broad and well-balanced curriculum for all young people. Staff have extended the range of vocational choices by introducing national qualification courses in crofting and hospitality this session. They are also making preparations to offer a construction course. Young people are supported well in their learning. The school has improved pastoral care and learning support for young people. Teachers sustain young people's interest through varied activities. Most teachers have improved the quality of feedback to young people about their classwork. Teachers make more effective use of information and communications technology to make lessons more interesting. Across the school, most teachers are not yet sharing the purposes of lessons thoroughly enough with young people. The

school recognises the need to encourage greater sharing of good practice among teachers to further improve learning and teaching. The school maintained its good standards of attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations. Young people also achieve success through a broad range of activities provided by the school. These include music, sport, public speaking and Gaelic language. The Pipe Band, *Flying Fiddles Group* and the *Junk Fashion Club* have brought recognition to the school.

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

The school is effectively improving its links with its associated primary and secondary schools. Staff are working together on a number of useful projects and work is taking place to align courses more closely. These steps will help ensure better progression in young people's learning. Through the newly-established Learning Community there is scope to build on these developments through careful planning involving all the associated schools. The school has strong partnerships with local businesses, organisations and Benbecula College to provide work experience, vocational and enterprise activities for young people. In particular, a local crofter is working effectively with young people who are taking the recently-introduced crofting course. Young people taking the hospitality course are benefiting through placements in commercial kitchens. Parents appreciate the improved style of reports and the helpful comments they contain on how young people can improve their performance. The education authority has still to improve school security and repair leaking windows. The school also requires improvements to heating and ventilation. The authority is planning to carry out all the necessary work in the next year.

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

Across the school, staff are taking a number of productive steps to improve how they gather information about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff in most departments are effectively developing the way in which they plan improvements. Senior managers check the progress of each department's action plans. Promoted staff visit classrooms more often to make sure the young people are making progress. Senior managers now need to plan all these approaches more thoroughly in order to use their findings to share good practice and identify further action. Staff effectively review young people's attainment in national examinations. They use questionnaires more frequently to seek the views of staff, pupils and parents. The school now has a well-established pupil council. Young people welcome the opportunity that this provides to improve their school.

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

The school has high expectations of young people. The very positive climate in the school provides a sound basis for effective learning. Teachers generally set high expectations for young people's work-rate and behaviour. Staff work effectively to provide young people with a curriculum suited to their needs. Young people are responding well to the school's increased emphasis on learning skills and homework. Teachers provide helpful homework classes during the lunch interval and after school. Young people are making better use of homework diaries to plan their work. Overall, young people respond well and make good progress. Almost all young people who leave the school do so for positive destinations in higher or further education, training or employment.

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

The school has a clear sense of direction. The acting headteacher and the senior management team are working well to take forward the school improvement priorities. They are well supported by staff. The school has improved the quality of its improvement planning process. The acting headteacher has effectively involved staff through the establishment of a number of working groups. Staff are taking some productive steps towards implementing the national programme, *Curriculum for Excellence*. The school now has a Parent Council.

9. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of improvement since the original inspection. The school performs well overall and the arrangements for self-evaluation are now satisfactory or better. With continued effective leadership and support from the local authority, the school is well placed to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the June 2006 inspection. The District Inspector will continue to engage with the education authority to monitor progress in the planned improvements to the school building.

Managing Inspector: Nigel Lawrie
9 June 2009

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