



**Priorsford Primary School
Peebles
Scottish Borders Council
24 February 2009**

We published a report on Priorsford Primary School in December 2006. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report 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 children 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 children 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.

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

Priorsford Primary School serves the town of Peebles to the south of the River Tweed, including the new Whitehaugh estate, the modern village of Cardrona and the rural areas of Manor and Kirkton Manor.

Since the original inspection in September 2006 the school has undergone several changes. From November 2007 an acting headteacher has led the school. A new headteacher has now been appointed and will take up the post in the near future. The school has had a extension built which has provided additional teaching space and further improvements are currently under way to improve the administration block of the school.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The commitment of the acting headteacher and the senior management team, working with the education authority, to secure sustained school improvement.
- The development of teamwork across the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

The quality of children's learning experiences is much improved. Children are more enthusiastic about learning. In classes, almost all of them are attentive and well motivated. Across the school, children are beginning to work well in pairs and in groups to collaborate on their learning. The quality of children's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved considerably. They are taking more pride in their written work. Standards of spelling and handwriting have improved. Children now make more regular use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support their learning across the curriculum. The school is continuing to broaden children's achievements, through enterprise activities and work in the school grounds. Further steps need to be taken to develop children's independence in learning.

Staff have been improving the curriculum. In particular, the mathematics and writing programmes have been further developed. Children have more frequent opportunities to be involved in interactive mathematics lessons. The overall quality of teaching is much better, with a stronger focus on meeting all children's learning needs. Most teachers are improving the way they ask children questions. They are involving children more actively in learning, including sharing the learning intentions of lessons with children. The quality of children's work has improved as a result of this. This now needs to be more

consistent across the school. Children feel well supported in class. In most cases, teachers are assessing their needs well and increasingly giving them work at the right level. Most lessons are at an appropriate pace and provide suitable challenge for children. A few more able children could be challenged more in their learning. The support for learning teachers work closely with class teachers to support children effectively. Support for learning assistants now support children's learning more effectively. Children who need extra help with some aspects of their learning have appropriate individual plans, and staff monitor their progress towards meeting agreed targets.

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

Parents are positive about the improvements in the school. The school now engages more effectively with parents and the community. Parents feel better consulted and find staff responsive to their enquiries. They receive information about their children's targets for improvement through their personal learning plans. Staff recognise the need to improve further this form of communication. The new Parent Council is working well and is supportive of the school. Staff now plan children's learning together at stage meetings. The school has effective links with a range of outside support agencies.

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

Staff are making steady progress in improving the school through self-evaluation. They are involved in deciding priorities for improvement and are taking more account of parents' views. The acting headteacher and management team have monitored improvements in learning, teaching and children's attainment. They examine teachers' plans and children's work, observe lessons, and

give teachers helpful feedback about their work. This monitoring process now needs to become more regular and rigorous to help the school to improve further. Teachers could develop their skills further by observing each other's practice.

The Eco committee and pupil council play an important role in consulting children about ways to improve the school. They have recently improved the school grounds with plants and paintings. The school has worked with a local community group to improve an old quarry through tree planting. P7 pupils have taken responsibility for organising clubs which are on offer as a reward for younger pupils. Staff are at an early stage in seeking children's views on how their learning might be improved.

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

The atmosphere in the school is much more positive. Staff, children and parents have worked well together to review the values of their school. Staff are increasingly setting higher expectations of children's work and behaviour. Pupils have much more pride in their school. Across the school, staff have introduced improved arrangements to encourage positive behaviour. Almost all children behave well. They now need to work with children to enable them to set targets for improving aspects of their work.

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

The leadership of the school is much stronger and staff morale is high. The acting headteacher is providing a clear way forward. He is well regarded by staff, children and parents. He has improved the system of communications within the school and developed teamwork amongst staff. He is leading them effectively in improving key aspects of the school's work. The school is much better organised for effective learning. The depute headteachers support the acting headteacher

well. They have led developments to improve aspects of learning and teaching, support for learning and the tracking of attainment. The principal teachers have contributed to the school's improvement. All staff now need to be given increased responsibility for leading or contributing to specific priorities in the school's improvement agenda.

8. What happens next?

The quality of pupils' learning experiences, the extent to which their needs are met, and improvements in the school's performance were all found to be at least satisfactory in the original inspection. The school has succeeded in making improvement to all these aspects since the inspection of September 2006. The education authority has supported the school well in the two year period since the inspection. With its continuing support, the school is now well placed to continue to improve and in consequence we will make no further visits in connection with the September 2006 inspection.

HM Inspector: Sadie Cushley

24 February 2009

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