

Learning community inspection



A report by HM Inspectorate of Education

**Inspection of the learning community
surrounding Kinlochbervie High School
The Highland Council
26 January 2010**

We inspect learning communities in order to let those who use services and the local community know whether learning communities provide appropriate learning opportunities and help learners in their development. We are also interested in how community and voluntary groups are helped to contribute to making communities better places to live and work. At the end of inspections, we agree ways in which staff and volunteers can improve the quality of learning for young people and adults and how the impact of community and voluntary groups can be further developed.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask managers and staff about the strengths of the learning community, 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 join other activities which young people, adults and community groups are involved in. We also gather the views of learners, active community members and staff. 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 provision locally.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of learning and development provided. We describe how well learners are doing and how good the learning community is at helping them to learn. We comment on how well staff, learners and groups work together and the difference they are making in the learning community. Finally, we focus on how well the learning community is led and how leaders help the learning community achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the learning community, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the learning community and, in many instances, a report on the secondary school closest to the learning community.

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1. The learning community

The learning community around Kinlochbervie High School includes the villages of Kinlochbervie, Durness, and Scourie and other small settlements including Achfary and Eriboll. The area is very sparsely populated. The catchment area of the school has a total population of around 1000 and lies within the Highland Council ward of North, West and Central Sutherland with a population of 5701. A high proportion of people of working age are self-employed. The other main forms of employment are agriculture, fishing, tourism and the public sector. Unemployment is lower than the national and Highland averages with some seasonal variation. Average household incomes are lower than the Highland and national averages and crofting to supplement incomes from part-time employment is relatively commonplace. Facilities within the school include a learning centre which provides opportunities for adults. HM inspectors undertook inspections in the learning communities surrounding Farr High School in September 2009 and Ullapool High School in October 2009. Information gained during these and other recent inspections in the Highland Council area was used to inform aspects of this inspection. Service managers accepted that progress made in self-evaluation and planning for improvement and in improvements in performance was broadly similar to evaluations in other recent inspections.

2. Particular strengths of the learning community

- Commitment and motivation of local community representatives and volunteers. This is helping to build “vibrant communities”.
- Productive networks and good awareness of need and levels of activity by local community groups.
- Impact of school staff on wider community groups and organisations.
- Active and well motivated young people.

3. Examples of good practice

- *Durness Development Group* is delivering local services including youth work and community programmes.
- *Sutherland Summit* is a good example of bringing a range of different stakeholders together to begin to establish shared priorities for development.

By visiting www.hmie.gov.uk you can find out more about these examples of good practice.

4. How well do participants learn and achieve?

There is a high level of voluntary community activity in the area. Local groups and organisations are active, well-informed and committed to improving their communities. Refurbishment of village halls has improved local facilities for use by community groups. Communication between local community councils, youth groups and the *Sutherland Partnership* is improving, following a successful *Sutherland Summit* held earlier this year. Providers have started to develop a clearer set of shared development priorities. Information on levels of provision and need in the area is improving through ward forums and the role of the Ward Manager. Currently, there is limited information available to providers to track performance. Information on numbers taking part in adult learning and youth sports activity is gathered but there is no overall system in place to measure or assess the impact of provision. It is not possible to measure local performance against aims, objectives and targets. A clearer approach to assessing the impact of services related to the local community plan and the single outcome agreement could enable providers to better demonstrate progress.

Young people

Young people are confident and appreciate the opportunities available to take part in out of school sports and recreational activities. A growing number of young people take part in activities organised through *Active Schools* programmes. Teachers and other staff in the school, volunteer to lead a range of groups and activities, including the Cape Wrath Boat Club which has enabled young people to develop skills in rowing and sailing. This has helped to improve confidence and fitness. Young people taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award volunteer to lead activities for children as part of their award programme. *The Durness Development Group* has enabled young people to take part in youth clubs in the village hall. A youth café for older teenagers has been established in the village. This facility is managed by the young people who use it. This provides a valuable opportunity for young people to take responsibility, socialise with friends and reduce social isolation. Young people help to lead children's activities in the village hall to help to keep young people healthy. Regular trips to other places help young people to experience other environments. There is a high level of awareness of *Highland Youth Voice* and the *Scottish Youth Parliament* and young

people in the area have received a significant level of support to sustain their involvement in these initiatives. Young people recently took the opportunity to voice their concerns and needs and at *Sutherland Summit*. They feel included and are able to raise issues and influence local community planning priorities. Currently, there is limited youth work activity in Kinlochbervie and Scourie apart from sports provision through *Active Schools*. A part-time Youth Development Officer post and a part-time Children's Services Officer post have been vacant since August. The Highland Council is taking steps to fill these posts and re-establish youth work provision. The Durness youth club provision focuses mainly on recreational activities and there is limited learning and development content. Young people would benefit from more opportunities to recognise their development of skills and confidence and their contribution as volunteers through a wider choice of award schemes. Provision could be improved through more focus on learning and development programmes relevant to issues facing young people in the area, such as safer driving schemes and access to transport and other services.

Adults

An increasing number of adults are learning and achieving through groups and classes provided by the North West Training Centre, a *Learn Direct* branded learning centre based in Kinlochbervie High School. Adult learners have developed computer skills ranging from introductory levels to accreditation in European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). Those taking part benefit in their personal lives and their work. Adults are improving skills relevant to local employment and gaining accreditation in First Aid, Food Hygiene and transportation of livestock. CV preparation supports employability in the area where it is common to have more than one part-time job. Learners are developing art, craft, and cookery and photography skills for use in their personal lives and in small business activity connected to the tourist trade. Some are learning foreign language skills. Participants benefit from reduced social isolation. They appreciate the welcoming and approachable style of the staff at the North West Training Centre, and the flexibility of the service. An increasing number of learners are accessing Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs). The Highland Council has recently established a fund to which learning centres can apply to increase the range and number learning opportunities available. Learning opportunities are promoted in the area at an annual Open Day, through publicity leaflets and posters and through contact with employers. Other methods of identifying learning needs, such as analysis of data on levels of qualifications, are limited. Although local staff have received initial training in adult literacy and numeracy there is no uptake of provision in the area. Adult literacy and numeracy approaches are seen by providers as largely traditional with one to one tutor to learner provision. Provision could be improved by better referral procedures and the introduction of more innovative group work programmes. High levels of parental engagement in local primary school could enable the introduction of family learning approaches. Some learners have Individual Learning Plans (ILP) but these need to be used to greater effect. More support could be given to help learners reflect, identify goals, consider the impact of their learning and find progression routes. Access to online or open learning through Colleges and

Universities is limited. In a geographically remote rural area, this restricts access to wider opportunities.

5. How well does CLD help the community to develop?

Community groups and organisations are active and influential within the three communities of Kinlochbervie, Scourie and Durness. They are largely self-supporting and show a very high level of commitment to improving their local communities. They foster strong and productive networks and their capacity to improve local services and facilities is now strengthened by community councillor representation on the new ward forums and by direct support from a Ward Manager. There are many examples of self-help initiatives where community councils have worked in partnership with services and agencies to improve their local communities, for example, bringing broadband to remote areas, securing effective signposting, building a marina in Kinlochbervie and developing attractive picnic sites. *Durness Development Group* was successful in purchasing premises from the Health Board to house the Durness Youth Café which is now run by the young people in the village. This group also attracts funding to employ workers to support a programme of work with children and young people. The North West Sutherland Care Alliance, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Community Bus Association are managed and supported by enthusiastic volunteers and all are inclusive and welcoming. Public agencies are confident in the ability of local groups to deliver services and work closely with them. Village hall committees and other community organisations have benefited through the training and support provided by agencies such as Council for Voluntary Service North (CVS). There is a strong commitment to the involvement of young people in community councils and other structures but they need some support to find ways to increase the involvement of young people.

6. How effective are providers in improving the quality of services?

The impact of services is evaluated effectively in some aspects of provision such as organisations reporting to stakeholders on the use of grant funding for particular programmes. Community organisations are successfully applying for funding to improve provision. Information about levels of activity at Council Ward level is improving. There is no overall partnership self-evaluation or local plan. Planning for improvement based on evidence of quality and impact is limited. There are no regular meetings of integrated learning community partners to assess progress, plan developments or report to stakeholders.

7. Does the learning community have a clear sense of direction?

The learning community is beginning to establish a clearer sense of direction. The *Sutherland Summit* recently brought stakeholders together to share concerns and identify development priorities. An action plan is to be produced to inform local and area plans. There is a need for partners at local delivery level to be clearer on how their work can contribute to an overall vision and plan for the area.

This will require improvements to planning, monitoring and evaluation and more focus on the outcomes of community learning and development activity.

8. What happens next?

There are significant improvements needed and community learning and development (CLD) providers do not yet have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. We will therefore revisit the learning community to check on progress within one year of publication of this report.

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

- Ensure key vacancies are filled.
- Develop youth work in Kinlochbervie and Scourie.
- Extend adult learning provision and address literacies needs.
- Improve evaluation of impact, planning for improvement and monitoring of progress at all levels.

Quality indicators help CLD providers 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 community learning and development? 2*".

HMIE checks five important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish CLD provision is doing. Here are the results for the learning community surrounding Kinlochbervie High School

Improvements in performance	weak
Impact on young people	satisfactory
Impact on adults	satisfactory
Impact of capacity building on communities	very good
Improving services	weak

Managing Inspector: Peter Hamilton
26 January 2010

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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