

**Lossiemouth High School
The Moray Council
12 June 2007**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Lossiemouth High School in January 2005. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

HM Inspectors revisited the school in January 2006 and February 2007 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

The headteacher continued to provide strong leadership. Staff had responded positively to the vision and values she had introduced. Most staff were now clear about the purposes of the various changes which the headteacher had introduced over the last two years. They had supported a range of important developments effectively, including the very significant increase in rigour applied to quality assurance. The school had been successful in achieving status as a School of Ambition. Through this success, it had recently secured additional funding.

The morale of staff was now high. Staff felt that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school had improved. The number of pupils excluded from school had been reduced. Pupils were positive about the expansion of extra-curricular activities and the much greater emphasis placed by staff on promoting and celebrating their achievements. Consultation with pupils had been improved, and opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility had been extended. The school had increased its use of a residential leadership initiative very effectively to develop the confidence and self-esteem of specific groups of pupils. As part of its caring culture, the school had made significant progress as a Health Promoting School. Further work was needed to improve attainment.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in January 2005 identified five main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Ensure improvement in standards of attainment at all stages.

The school had made weak progress in meeting this main point for action.

Senior managers had ensured that the raising of attainment was given high priority. Teachers had raised their expectations of pupils' achievement at S3 to S6 by setting them clear attainment targets. Some departments had improved attainment by matching tasks more closely to pupils' learning needs. This good practice was not yet consistently developed across the school. Better approaches to tracking pupils' attainment across all subjects meant that pupils who were under-achieving were now more readily identified and better supported

by staff. The school was also involving parents more systematically if their children were under-achieving. Improvements in pupils' overall attainment were largely restricted to S1/S2. By the end of S2, attainment in writing and mathematics improved significantly in 2006. Attainment in reading had improved, but to a lesser extent. By the end of S4, pupils' overall performance at Standard Grade level or equivalent remained notably below that in similar schools. There was evidence of slight improvement at General level in 2006. By the end of S6, pupils' attainment at Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher levels remained notably below that in similar schools, with evidence of decreased performance in some aspects in 2006.

3.2 Ensure improvement in the overall quality of learning and teaching, including greater attention to pupils' differing learning needs and clearer advice to pupils on improving their work.

The school had made good progress towards meeting this main point for action.

Teachers in a number of departments, including mathematics and physical education, had adjusted their approaches to provide greater challenge for higher attaining pupils. Support for learning staff had been re-deployed to provide more focused support for an appropriate range of pupils. The school had developed its curriculum to meet a wider range of pupil needs. Most teachers were now providing pupils with better advice on ways to improve their work. Staff had developed more National Qualifications courses at Access level for pupils with additional support needs and had improved the provision of vocational courses through closer links with Moray College. Some teachers now shared the aims of lessons more clearly with pupils. This good practice was uneven across the school. Teachers' use of questioning was not always focused or searching enough to challenge pupils' thinking and check understanding. Teachers generally matched coursework well to pupils' differing learning needs at S3 to S6, but less well in some subjects at S1/S2.

3.3 Ensure improvement in the management and coordination of learning support and behaviour support, including better joint working with subject departments in meeting the needs of pupils with individualised educational programmes (IEPs), and more effective approaches to reducing disruptive behaviour.

The school had made very good progress in meeting this main point for action.

Accommodation for pupil support teachers had been greatly improved, enabling much closer working between pastoral and support for learning staff. Teamwork in the pupil support team was promoted very effectively by the deputy headteacher in charge. The pupil forum, which included various support staff, continued to play a very effective role in coordinating support for pupils with additional needs. The support for learning department was now much more proactive in assisting class teachers, including the adaptation of resources to meet pupils' needs. Subject teachers were collaborating more effectively with support for learning staff in relation to pupils with IEPs, helping to set individual targets and monitor pupils' progress. Disruptive behaviour by a minority of pupils had been successfully reduced. Teachers had received training in dealing with classroom conflict, and they felt more assured about the procedures to adopt if pupils misbehaved. Most teachers had improved their use of praise to

help motivate pupils, and their approaches to dealing with indiscipline were calmer and more positive.

3.4 Ensure improvement in the development of teamwork within the senior management team.

The senior management team had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher had effectively adjusted the depute headteachers' remits to make best use of their individual strengths. Daily meetings of the team had helped to improve teamwork. Staff were confident of an effective and consistent response from all members of the team if a difficulty arose. Members of the team were more frequently engaged with pupils and staff around the school and contributed well to ensuring a positive atmosphere.

3.5 Ensure improvement in approaches to departmental and whole-school self-evaluation, including the monitoring of classroom practice and better systems for tracking pupils' progress.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

Teachers were positive about the school's new approaches to quality assurance. They were more reflective about their own classroom practices. Senior managers had increased the scope and rigour of departmental reviews. These now included a sharper focus on the quality of learning and teaching, pupils' progress and staff performance. In addition to more formal classroom observations by senior managers and principal teachers, unpromoted teachers were also observing colleagues' teaching. Observations of lessons were well structured and the process was helping to share good practice across the school. Senior managers, in particular, were identifying and sharing key points for improvement. Some aspects, such as the quality of teachers' questioning, required more attention. A staff working group was continuing to observe and share good practice in important aspects of learning and teaching. Teachers who required help were positively supported by appointed colleagues. The school's improved system for tracking pupils' attainment across all subjects was helping to identify appropriate targets for pupils and to address under-achievement.

4. Conclusion

Since the original inspection of 2005, the school had made good or very good progress in meeting most of the main points for action. Staff had responded very positively to a series of important changes which had strengthened the school's capacity for continuous improvement. The headteacher's very focused leadership, and support from the senior management team, had been instrumental in carrying forward these changes. The morale of staff was now high and there was an increasing ethos of achievement amongst pupils. Staff had taken effective steps to evaluate and improve the quality of learning and teaching. These useful steps had not yet fully impacted on attainment, although there were some signs of improvement. Further work was needed to implement good practice consistently across all classes.

HM Inspectors have asked the education authority to continue to monitor the school's progress closely, especially its progress and success in raising attainment. Another report to parents and carers on the extent of the improvements which have been achieved will be provided within a year of the publication of this report.

Dr Tom Straiton
HM Inspector

12 June 2007

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Educational Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about follow-through inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also email HMIEcomplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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