

**Portgordon Primary School
The Moray Council
2 September 2008**

Contents

Page

1. The inspection	1
2. Continuous improvement	1
3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action	1
4. Conclusion	3
How can you contact us?	4

1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Portgordon Primary School in June 2006. 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 April 2008 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 at the time of the initial inspection left the school in May 2006 to take up another post within the education authority. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006 and left the school in October 2007. The present headteacher was appointed in November 2007. She had been the principal teacher in the school and had been acting headteacher between May 2006 and September 2006, and in October 2007. The headteacher had ensured that the changes in school leadership had not impacted negatively on the school's capacity to improve. Staff morale had remained high and staff had confidence in the leadership of the headteacher. As a result of the falling school roll, the number of classes had reduced from four to three.

School staff, with the effective support of parents and the education authority, had worked effectively to successfully improve the behaviour of pupils. The school had improved pupils' awareness of how to improve their environment. As a result, the school had gained an Eco-Schools Scotland bronze award and had achieved a John Muir Trust Award. School staff had further improved the involvement of parents, carers and families. Staff and parents worked in partnership to organise a wide range of very successful social and curriculum events. Pupils made regular and high quality presentations to parents and the community about what they had been learning.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in June 2006 identified four 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 Improve attainment in English language and mathematics.

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

Pupils had responded very well to improved opportunities to learn in groups and to develop their talking and listening skills. Staff now provided more effective activities to support the development of pupils' reading skills and knowledge about texts. Pupils had improved their skills in discussing the writers' craft and had increased their enjoyment of reading. Most pupils now wrote for a wider range of purposes and their writing skills had improved. For a

few pupils at the upper stages, writing activities were too often undemanding and did not motivate pupils to use their imagination when writing. At the middle and upper stages, teachers' expectations of the length and quality of pupils' writing were still too low. In mathematics, teachers now presented pupils with a wider range of more challenging tasks and pupils had responded well. At the early and upper stages, pupils' skills in carrying out mental calculations had improved. Staff at these stages had also effectively improved pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems. Pupils could describe a range of strategies they could use to solve problems and most applied these well to solve unfamiliar examples. Staff did not yet use assessment effectively to ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress. At the middle stages, pupils' skills in mental calculation and problem solving showed insufficient improvement. Overall, as a result of the improvements made, pupils' skills in English language and mathematics had improved. More remained to be done to ensure the consistent development of pupils' skills in imaginative writing and in aspects of mathematics.

3.2 Improve the structure of the curriculum to ensure that all pupils develop appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

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

Staff had improved programmes in a range of curriculum areas. Pupils now had more effective opportunities to use their skills across the curriculum. Staff arranged effective whole school activities which provided pupils with appropriate opportunities to work with others on challenging tasks. Pupils' skills in using information and communications technology (ICT) had improved. All pupils had produced graphic and text presentations as part of a history presentation to parents. Pupils at P6/P7 had developed their skills in using ICT through taking responsibility for maintaining an electronic notice board. School staff had not yet consistently ensured that pupils progressively developed a full range of ICT skills. A whole school health promotion week had contributed significantly to developing pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The health education programme was not yet fully in place. Overall, as a result of the improvements made, pupils now had a broader range of learning experiences. More remained to be done to ensure effective progression in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.

3.3 Improve the pace and challenge in learning and teaching to ensure that all pupils' needs are met effectively.

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

Staff now gave pupils more effective opportunities to be active in their learning. Pupils now collaborated well with others and engaged in more challenging learning activities. Regular whole school 'learning challenges' motivated pupils and provided opportunities for them to improve their skills in working together. In the majority of lessons pupils were clear on the purpose of the lesson and what they needed to do to improve their work. Teachers and pupils now had more appropriate expectations of what pupils could achieve. Staff mostly used questioning well to check and extend pupils' understanding. Pace and challenge in learning and teaching were still inconsistent. As a result of the improvements made, pupils' needs were now met more effectively. More remained to be done to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.

3.4 Improve the arrangements for evaluating the quality of learning, teaching and attainment to ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress.

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

The headteacher had developed a wide range of mostly effective approaches to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' attainment. She regularly monitored teaching in classrooms and provided helpful feedback and guidance to teachers. With the helpful support of the education authority, she had arranged extensive training which had effectively increased teachers' skills. Staff had not yet ensured that improved practice was a consistent feature of pupils' experiences. The headteacher regularly discussed pupils' learning and progress with class teachers. Staff now worked effectively, with the support for learning teacher, to identify areas in which pupils required additional support. The headteacher had introduced a number of effective approaches to gather the views of pupils, parents and staff about the quality of the school's work. She had focused the school's improvement plan more appropriately on improving the quality of learners' experiences. As a result of the improvements made, school staff now monitored learning, teaching and pupils' progress more effectively.

4. Conclusion

The school and education authority had made satisfactory progress in meeting three of the main points for action. They had made good progress in addressing one main point for action. As a result of the overall satisfactory progress, HM Inspectors will make no further visits to the school in connection with the inspection report of June 2006. Through District Inspector links, HM Inspectors will monitor the school's progress in improving attainment, developing the quality of the curriculum and increasing pace and challenge in learning and teaching. Parents will be informed of the progress made by the school.

Jacqueline Sinclair
HM Inspector

2 September 2008

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.

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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.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail 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.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@sps.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.sps.org.uk.

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