



**Tomintoul Primary School
The Moray Council
9 December 2008**

We published a report on Tomintoul Primary School in November 2006. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out an interim follow-through inspection in September 2007 and published a report on this visit in November 2007. This is the report of the follow-through inspection carried out in September 2008.

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.

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. How well do children learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

The school serves the village of Tomintoul and the surrounding rural area. Since the original inspection, significant staff changes have taken place, including the appointment of a new headteacher and a principal teacher. The headteacher also manages Glenlivet Primary School.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Improved attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Improved quality in learning and teaching.
- Positive and successful efforts to improve partnership with parents.
- The very positive atmosphere in the school.
- The leadership of the headteacher and staff involvement in improving 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. At P1 to P5, particularly, children are developing good skills in learning independently and collaborating in groups. Children are better informed about how they can improve their work. Their attainment is much better in reading, writing and especially mathematics. They are taking more pride in their written work. The school is continuing to broaden children's achievements, particularly through enterprise activities.

Staff have been improving the curriculum. The mathematics programme, particularly, is now better developed. At P1 to P5, a scheme to develop children's thinking skills and collaborative working has improved their enjoyment and confidence in learning. Staff are making a good start to implementing the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. The overall quality of teaching is much better, with a stronger focus on meeting all children's learning needs. Teachers are improving the way they ask children questions. They are involving

children more actively in learning, including evaluating each other's writing. Homework is better planned. Children feel well supported in class. In most cases, teachers are assessing their needs well and giving them work at the right level. The support for learning teacher works closely with class teachers and supports children effectively.

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

Parents are very 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 clearer advice about homework and information about their children's targets for improvement in English language and mathematics. The new Parent Council is working well. The school is planning further open afternoons to help inform parents about their children's learning. All parents require a clearer report on the school's evaluations of its work. The school has effective links with a range of outside support agencies. It is working with the Crown Estates to help children achieve further success as an Eco School.

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

Staff are making good progress in improving the school through self-evaluation. They are well involved in deciding priorities for improvement and are taking more account of parents' views. The headteacher has carefully monitored improvements in learning and teaching and children's attainment. She examines teachers' plans and children's work, observes lessons, and gives teachers helpful feedback about their work. This monitoring process is working well. It now requires a little more rigour to help the school to improve further. Teachers could develop their skills 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. Staff are not yet 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 very positive. Staff set high expectations of children's work and behaviour. Almost all children behave well. They now set targets for improving aspects of their work. Staff are working to develop children's sense of fairness and respect towards others. At P6/P7, children's personal and social development is being improved through a citizenship programme. Most children feel safe and well looked after in school. With support from Social Work Services, all staff have now been trained in child protection.

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

The leadership of the school is much stronger and staff morale is high. The headteacher is providing a clear way forward. She is well regarded by staff, children and parents. She has developed teamwork amongst staff and leads them effectively in improving key aspects of the school's work. The school is much better organised for effective learning. The principal teacher supports the headteacher well. She has led developments to improve aspects of the curriculum and is beginning to take a greater part in evaluating learning and teaching. The headteacher has begun to give more responsibilities to other staff. The education authority is supporting the school well and contributing to its considerable improvement.

8. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of continued improvement in the school since the first follow-through visit in September 2007. The school now performs well overall and is well placed to go on improving. The quality of improvements in children's performance, of learners' experiences, and of meeting learning needs, is now satisfactory or better. We will make no further visits in connection with the original inspection report of November 2006.

HM Inspector: Dr Tom Straiton
9 December 2008

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