

**Lossiemouth High School  
Interim follow-through  
The Moray Council  
28 March 2006**

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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. The report indicated that HM Inspectors would engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress and would publish an interim report within one year of the publication of the original report.

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. An inspection team carried out an interim follow-through visit to the school in January 2006. The team assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

## **2. Continuous improvement**

One of the two acting headteachers at the time of the inspection had since been appointed as headteacher. She had strongly encouraged staff to adopt a fresh and positive view of educational issues in the school and a shared sense of values. She had increased the capacity of staff to take the school forward through improving provision for continuous professional development. Staff reported that the organisation of the school had been improved and they now felt a clearer sense of leadership and direction. Overall standards of pupil behaviour had been improved and staff morale was noticeably better. Since the inspection, the education authority had provided effective support to the school, including improvements to accommodation, resources and staffing. In recognition of the school's determination to improve, Moray Council had supported the school's recent bid for additional funding from the Scottish Executive as a School of Ambition.

Despite the various improvements made by staff, there was not yet any overall improvement in attainment. At S1/S2, pupils' attainment had improved slightly in writing, but declined in reading and mathematics. In 2005, overall attainment at Standard Grade or equivalent had improved to exceed the national average, but no improvement had taken place at General or Credit levels. Pupils' overall performance at Higher in S5/S6 had continued to decline. Examination results at S4 and S5/S6 continued to be notably poorer than in other schools with similar characteristics.

The school had given major emphasis to developing pupils' wider achievements. Displays around the school had been improved to promote and celebrate pupils' various activities and successes. Pupils were very positive about the increased range and uptake of clubs and other out-of-class activities. Over 100 pupils, for example, were involved in the school's entry for the Global Rock Challenge. Selected pupils from S2 had developed their leadership skills by attending a residential experience. Senior pupils had been given extended responsibilities for supporting younger ones and for helping to supervise around the school. An Eco School group had been established to promote pupils' involvement in looking after the environment. The school was working towards a silver award as a health-promoting school.

Overall, the school had enhanced its capacity for improvement. Its ethos had improved and uncertainties about its future leadership had been removed. Despite a few misgivings

amongst staff about the rapid pace of change in the school, staff morale and teamwork were significantly better. Staff were actively supporting new developments in quality assurance.

### **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 begun to take appropriate action to meet this main point for action.

Departmental review meetings between senior promoted and principal teachers were increasingly focused on ways to improve attainment. Some departments were providing new National Qualification (NQ) courses which were better matched to pupils' needs to help to improve their attainment. Communication about pupils who found classwork difficult had been improved. At S5, in particular, members of the senior management team and guidance staff were mentoring pupils who might have difficulty achieving their potential in examinations. There were plans to extend this mentoring to other year-groups. Staff had also begun to identify pupils at S4 and S5 who experienced difficulty with essential skills of literacy and numeracy with a view to providing additional support for them. The school was at an early stage of setting pupils individual targets to help to improve their attainment. Practice in target-setting across subject departments was inconsistent.

#### **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.**

Some departments had made effective progress towards meeting this main point for action, but others had not.

To help to improve the overall quality of learning and teaching, teachers had participated in well-focused school-based training on the national initiative *Assessment is for Learning*. Some individual teachers and departments had begun to implement key aspects of this initiative, such as sharing learning aims and assessment criteria with pupils, and providing helpful written comments on their work. However, this good practice was not yet consistently applied. Too many teachers were still giving insufficient feedback to pupils about their work. The introduction of new NQ courses was helping to meet more pupils' needs. However, some courses at S1/S2 in particular still took too little account of pupils' prior attainment and learning needs.

### **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 was working well to address this main point for action.

A new support for pupils forum had been established, comprising senior managers, guidance, support for learning and behaviour support staff. This forum was helping to address the needs of individual pupils in a much more coordinated way. New accommodation was planned which would bring together guidance and support for learning staff. Appropriately, the school planned to include pupils who received behaviour support within this facility. Joint working between support for learning staff and class teachers had been considerably improved. The support for learning department had provided teachers with helpful guidance about specific learning difficulties, and advice on using support for learning auxiliaries effectively in classes. Communication and involvement of class teachers in supporting pupils with IEPs was much improved.

Approaches to reducing disruptive behaviour in most classes had been improved. The number of pupils excluded from the school had been substantially reduced. Staff had been trained in applying new solutions to dealing with disruptive behaviour. The school's policy on promoting positive behaviour had been clarified for staff and parents and was generally successful. However, not all staff were implementing it consistently. The support for pupils forum was monitoring instances of misbehaviour and had begun to target support for teachers as necessary. Pupils' behaviour around the school was good, and in almost all classes visited pupils were well focused on their work.

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

The senior management team (SMT) had taken effective steps to meet this main point for action.

Teamwork within SMT was continuing to develop. The headteacher had improved communication within the team by starting each day with a brief team meeting. Individual remits had been revised to take greater account of individual strengths. Staff felt clearer about senior managers' individual responsibilities and lines of referral. Members of SMT were playing a more prominent role in monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour around the school. They were also developing greater rigour in reviewing and improving the work of their linked departments.

### **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 significant progress in working to address this main point for action.

The school had drawn up a clear programme of quality assurance activities. The education authority had provided helpful training for principal teachers in the use of quality indicators. Departments were now using these indicators more systematically to review aspects of their work and to help determine the school's overall plans for improvement. Departmental reviews involving senior managers had been widened in scope to include the discussion of key aspects of learning and teaching which the school was trying to improve. Senior managers and principal teachers were now regularly involved in class visits to monitor aspects of learning and teaching and provide feedback to teachers. A working group of staff was monitoring progress with developments in *Assessment is for Learning* with a view to highlighting and sharing good practice. Class teachers had also begun to visit colleagues' classes to learn from each other. External consultants were carrying out a survey of parental views about the school. The tracking of pupils' progress was improving at S5/S6 but the school had still to develop suitable approaches to enable this to happen at all stages.

## **4. Conclusion**

Overall, the school and education authority had made a positive start to addressing the main points for action. The headteacher had encouraged fresh thinking amongst staff. She had led a range of initiatives which were having a positive effect on ethos, teamwork and school self-evaluation. Staff and pupils confirmed that pupils' behaviour had improved, particularly in corridors and public areas of the school. Some inconsistency remained in teachers' approaches to promoting positive behaviour in classrooms. A major initiative was ongoing to try to improve overall standards of learning and teaching. Thus far, the impact had been variable across classes. The findings from classroom monitoring now required to be translated into real improvements in practice. Several departments had introduced new courses to meet pupils' needs more effectively. Significant improvements were evident in support for learning. Approaches to helping pupils with additional support needs were now coordinated more effectively. The most pressing challenge for the school was to raise attainment.

HMIE will continue to engage with the school and education authority and provide another report on progress for parents and carers within one year of the publication of this report.

Robert D Barfoot, HMI  
District Inspector

28 March 2006

## **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](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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