



**Milne's High School
Fochabers
The Moray Council
3 November 2009**

We published a report on Milne's High School in January 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in August 2009. It 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 young people 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.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school

Milne's High School serves the communities of Fochabers, Mosstodloch, Lhanbryde, Urquhart, Garmouth and Spey Bay. Since the original inspection, the headteacher and principal teacher of English retired and new appointments were made.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Hardworking and well-behaved young people.
- High quality team work and professional development opportunities.
- Commitment of staff and young people to improving the school.
- Leadership of the headteacher and other senior managers.

3. Example of good practice

- Developing creativity to improve attainment.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people are eager to learn, achieve and take responsibility for their learning. Most know their strengths and what they need to do to improve their learning. Teachers have higher expectations of what young people can achieve. Young people continue to achieve in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. At S2, the majority of young people achieve appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The school now monitors and builds on the progress of young people in all their subjects. At S4, attainment is in line with national averages and with schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. There is room to continue to improve attainment at S5/6.

The school is working towards the recommended two hours of core physical education for all young people. Young people benefit from an improved and better organised choice of options to build on what they have already learned. This is increasing the motivation and progress of young people, particularly those in S5/6. Staff, young people and parents work well together to develop relevant activities across the school. The implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* is progressing very well. The school has identified the need for teachers to provide tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for all young people. Staff are taking steps to improve this.

5. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?

School staff work with a range of partners to support young people's learning. A number of departments work alongside a local business to provide innovative enterprise activities around developing a new brand of soup. Stronger links with associated primary schools have developed. These are beginning to improve young people's skills in areas such as literacy and numeracy. The Parent Council is actively involved in improving the school. The well organised work of the chaplains increases young people's awareness of moral issues.

6. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff, young people and parents are more involved in improving the school. Their opinions are gathered and action taken on key issues. Senior managers have more effective links with departments and support improvements across the school. A range of methods, including focussed lesson observations, are used to review and improve teaching and learning. Most principal teachers are increasingly effective in monitoring the work of departments and improving what happens in the classroom. The pupil council, peer

support programme and the new prefect system are increasing opportunities for young people to improve the work of the school.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

Parents, young people and staff are proud of the school and morale is very high. Expectations of staff and young people have improved greatly. Young people work enthusiastically with staff and enjoy the increased challenge in most lessons. They are set targets for improvement and a number are mentored by volunteer staff. This has led to improved achievement. Young people are proud to wear the new school uniform. The recently developed praise system encourages young people to work hard. It is being reviewed to ensure all young people have opportunities to benefit from it. There are now sufficient opportunities to reflect on religious and moral issues.

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

The new headteacher has had a very positive impact on the work of the school. Senior managers now have clear roles which allow them to focus on improving the quality of learning, teaching and achievement. The effective teamwork across the school is increasing the pace of improvement. Many teachers lead activities, including working groups and training for colleagues. Increasingly, young people develop leadership skills through pupil council activities and opportunities to lead groups, discussions and presentations in classes.

9. What happens next?

The school and education authority have achieved major improvements since the inspection of October 2007. The headteacher, along with her senior management team, provides strong leadership and a clear vision. The school is well placed to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the original inspection. The District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor continued improvements in attainment.

HM Inspector: David Gregory
3 November 2009

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