



**Nairn Academy
The Highland Council
20 April 2010**

We published a report on Nairn Academy in June 2007. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out a follow-through inspection in February 2009 and published a report on that visit in April 2009.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in February 2010. 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 analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

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1. The school

Nairn Academy serves the town of Nairn and surrounding rural communities. A new headteacher has been in post for eight months. There have been further major improvements to accommodation, including the science department and school library.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The improved school ethos.
- Staff teamwork and growing attention to school self-evaluation and improvement.
- The strong start made by the new headteacher in leading the school forward.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Improvements to accommodation have enhanced the learning environment. The atmosphere in classes continues to be positive. Most teachers interact well with young people. Almost all young people are motivated and hardworking. Most subjects provide well for the differing learning needs of young people, including those young people who require significant additional support. Teachers do not always focus lessons enough on the main things they want young people to learn. Young people still have too few opportunities to develop independence in learning and require better feedback and clear targets for improving their work. At S1/S2, previous improvements in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are being maintained. At S3/S4, there is no overall change in attainment. Examination results in Highers at S5/S6 are now better. In English, many young people's learning needs are not well met and overall attainment is unsatisfactory. The school continues to promote young people's achievements successfully in a wide range of out-of-class activities.

The school is improving the curriculum. There are now fewer shared classes. At S5/S6, a limited amount of religious and moral education and a programme of physical activity have been introduced for all young people. The school should now aim to achieve the national

target of two hours of high quality physical education each week for all. A few young people with significant additional support needs now take appropriate national qualifications. Staff are at an early stage of introducing *Curriculum for Excellence*. The S1 programme for personal and social education (PSE) is being improved, taking account of young people's views. Opportunities for PSE at S5/S6 continue to be limited. Several subject departments have worked well together to enhance young people's learning experiences. All subjects should develop better curricular links with associated primary schools to ensure that young people build on their prior learning when they enter S1.

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

School staff continue to strengthen communication with parents. They have recently surveyed parents' views, sharing the findings with parents and explaining how they will make improvements. Interim reports for pupils at S4 to S6 are helping to alert parents to their children's progress. The headteacher has a strong partnership with the Parent Council. Staff are continuing to work in close partnership with external agencies to assist young people with additional support needs. Effective links are being maintained with Moray College to provide motivating vocational courses for some young people.

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

The school continues to seek the views of staff and young people to help it improve. Staff have positive attitudes to self-evaluation and improvement. Most now serve on or lead school improvement teams. Teachers are more willing to offer colleagues advice after observing their lessons. Only a few subjects are actively seeking pupils' views about their learning experiences. Staff should now agree a clear school policy on learning and teaching to ensure consistent good

practice. Principal teachers and senior managers need to play a more effective role in monitoring and improving the quality of learning. The headteacher is involving teachers in more rigorous discussion of their classes' performance in examinations. The school's approach to checking and tracking young people's attainment requires further development to identify and support effectively those who are underachieving.

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

Staff are maintaining improved standards of young people's behaviour. The school has raised its expectations of senior pupils by ensuring that they all study sufficient courses. It has improved independent study facilities for S6. Young people can now gain achievement certificates when they demonstrate key skills for learning, life and work set out in *Curriculum for Excellence*. In classes, there is still some variation in teachers' expectations of young people's achievement. Standards of care remain high.

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

Leadership of the school has been strengthened by the appointment of the new headteacher. She is building strongly on the improvements made by her predecessor and is providing a clear way forward for the school. Staff morale and teamwork, including teamwork in the senior management team, are much stronger than at the time of the original inspection. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the school is well placed to go on improving.

8. What happens next?

The school has improved aspects of its work since the original inspection. The atmosphere for learning and staff teamwork are much better in almost all departments. Further work is needed to broaden

young people's learning skills and improve attainment in key areas. Within one year of the publication of this report, we will ask the education authority to provide us with a report on the school's progress. This report should include particular attention to attainment in English. Depending on the progress which has been made, we will consider whether or not to carry out any further inspection visits. Parents will be informed about the progress made.

HM Inspector: Tom Straiton
20 April 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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