



**Portessie Primary School
The Moray Council
17 November 2009**

We published a report on Portessie Primary School in October 2007. 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 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.

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

Portessie Primary School serves the village of Portessie and the surrounding area. The headteacher was appointed in November 2008 having led the school in an acting capacity since October 2007. The principal teacher retired in June 2009. A new principal teacher took up post in August 2009. The school roll has fallen from 102 at the time of the original inspection to 79.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The leadership of the headteacher.
- Improvement in children's attainment.
- Improved staff teamwork and morale.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Teachers are improving the rate of children's learning by reducing the number of tasks based on textbook work. Children are now better motivated by the increased opportunities to work collaboratively. For example, in P6/7 children work well together to investigate how to make a complaint. At the middle stages, children provide others with helpful feedback on their presentation skills. Across the stages, children continue to achieve success in many sporting and cultural activities including cross-country running, dancing and walking. Attainment in English language and mathematics has improved steadily. Most children are now achieving well. They listen carefully to each other and discuss their ideas with more confidence. They know how to improve their writing. Most children now undertake mental calculations quickly and with accuracy. They work together regularly to solve practical mathematical problems. Children's skills in using computers to handle information are still not developed well enough. Staff now effectively encourage children to take greater responsibility for their own learning in all areas of the curriculum. Children undertake more tasks and activities that meet their learning needs. The headteacher has improved the arrangements to identify and support children's individual needs. At the early stages, a few play activities are not yet challenging enough for some children to learn effectively from them.

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

The headteacher has worked well with the supportive Parent Council to agree a vision and direction for the school. Communication with parents has improved and they are better informed about the work of the school. Staff are looking at ways to provide parents with more time to discuss their children's progress. The parent support group continues to raise funds and helps children to develop their enterprise skills well through their participation in school events. Productive links with the playgroup and local schools have been maintained successfully.

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

Children are making an increasing contribution to improving the school. The pupil council has helped to create the school's vision and values. Children in the eco group work together well to reduce the amount of litter in the school. Staff use the views of all children to bring about further improvement. The headteacher is working well with staff to improve children's learning experiences. All staff are ensuring that priorities for development are taken forward effectively. This involvement and the stability in the leadership of the school has significantly improved staff morale.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

Staff now work together more effectively and have higher expectations of what children can achieve. At all stages, teachers encourage children to do their best. Children are responding well to these improved expectations. As a result, attainment has improved. Staff celebrate children's successes and achievements at regular

assemblies. Relationships between staff and children are very positive. Children now feel safer in school as a result of the improved traffic control measures implemented by the education authority.

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

Leadership of the school is much improved. Staff know their strengths and areas for development and have clear plans to improve the school's work. The approaches the school uses to assess and improve its performance have ensured that children are making good progress in their learning. All staff are now working together well to provide a better education for children. Overall, Portessie Primary School shows a strong capacity to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

There is clear evidence of improvement since the original inspection and the school now performs well overall. The arrangements to evaluate the quality of the school's work are now at a satisfactory level or better. With continued strong leadership, commitment of staff and support from the authority, the school is well placed to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the October 2007 inspection.

HM Inspector: June Graham
17 November 2009

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