

**Croy Primary School  
and Nursery Class  
The Highland Council  
22 January 2008**

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## 1. Background

Croy Primary School and nursery class were inspected in October 2007 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined the quality of the children's experience in the nursery, pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council, and a group of parents<sup>1</sup>.

The school serves the village of Croy and the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 75, including 15 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher, to assist the education authority, had taken up a headteacher post in another school on a temporary basis. An acting headteacher had been appointed in Croy Primary School and had been in post since Easter 2007.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pastoral care.
- The positive behaviour of pupils, and their attitudes to learning.
- Steps taken by staff to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of other cultures.
- Partnership working of the school with other agencies, and the work of the support for learning teacher, in supporting vulnerable pupils.

## 3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

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

Parents, including those with children in the nursery, were very positive about most aspects of the school. They felt that teachers provided stimulating and challenging work for pupils, and helped parents to support children with homework. A few parents felt that they needed more information on their children's strengths and on areas in which children could improve. Pupils were very positive about almost all aspects of the school, and enjoyed being there. They felt that staff helped them to stay safe and healthy. A few pupils felt that the behaviour of some pupils in the school was not good enough, and that homework was too easy. Staff were very pleased with all aspects of the school and were positive about the way the school was led.

#### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

##### **Pupils' learning experiences and achievements**

The curriculum was of good quality overall. The nursery provided a broad and balanced curriculum which included effective use of the playroom and outdoor play area. At the primary stages, teachers affectively developed pupils' skills in English language and mathematics across other areas of the curriculum. Staff had allocated additional time within the school week to English language and mathematics. This had not yet been effective in raising attainment in these areas. Pupils at all stages benefited from a high quality annual enterprise activity. They participated in two hours of effective physical education each week, in line with national guidance. Teachers set pupils to work for very long blocks of time on each curriculum area. This meant that pupils spent too long on individual tasks, which slowed their progress. The overall quality of teaching was adequate. Staff in the nursery consistently and effectively used questioning and discussion to support and challenge children in their learning. They used praise well to celebrate children's efforts and achievements. Teachers at the primary stages gave clear explanations and instructions. They used praise well to motivate pupils and help maintain very positive relationships in classrooms. In almost all lessons, teachers ensured that pupils were well engaged in their learning. In a few lessons, teaching approaches were imaginative and stimulating, with questioning which developed pupils' understanding well. Teachers did not effectively share with pupils the purposes of lessons. In too many lessons, teachers did not take appropriate account of pupils' prior learning. Teachers set regular homework, but did not use it effectively to extend pupils' learning.

The overall quality of pupils' learning was good. Throughout the school, almost all children and pupils were highly motivated and well-behaved. In the nursery, staff were responsive to children's interests and involved them in choosing activities. At the primary stages, almost all pupils engaged very well in their learning. They had frequent opportunities to work together on tasks, and did this very effectively. In a few lessons, pupils were encouraged to carry out independent research. Pupils' thinking about scientific ideas developed well through predicting the results of experiments and then carrying the experiments out. Staff effectively promoted pupils' creativity and independent thinking through a range of well planned activities. These included an enterprise project to set up the Christmas show and effective work in art and design. At the early stages, pupils had too few opportunities to learn through active play. Across all primary stages, pupils were not always clear enough about the purposes of lessons. Teachers did not consistently ensure that pupils took appropriate responsibility for their own learning.

School staff promoted pupils' wider achievement well. Children in the nursery class were making very good progress in key areas. All children used a wide range of art and craft materials to create pictures. They participated enthusiastically when singing and exploring sound and rhythm with musical instruments and most engaged well in role play. Most children carried out simple tasks on the computer and could use the digital camera appropriately. All children successfully took part in a wide range of activities to learn about the world around them. They collected and sorted a variety of materials from the environment and investigated the properties of sand, water, dough and foam. All children were developing appropriate hand and finger control through a wide range of activities. Pupils at the primary stages improved their physical fitness and team working skills in a wide range of sporting activities. These included cross-country running, football, trampolining, cricket and rugby. Pupils were developing appropriate skills in curling as part of their preparation for the local Celtic Games. The P7 residential trip was effective in allowing pupils to experience living away from home and working together. All pupils' citizenship skills, and their awareness of sustainable development, were well developed through involvement in the pupil and Eco council.

### **English language**

Children in the nursery class were making good progress in communication and language. All children were confident when talking to one another and other adults. They enjoyed listening to stories. They shared books with one another and most children could recognise their name in print. A few children were developing effective early writing skills. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Almost all pupils at the early stages, and most at the middle and upper stages, were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. A minority of pupils exceeded these levels. Attainment in reading at the middle stages had been steadily improving. Most pupils who were not achieving national levels were making good progress in their learning. Across the primary stages, almost all pupils listened attentively, and confidently expressed opinions, thoughts and feelings. When discussing in pairs or trios, pupils cooperated well and offered their own ideas or supported those of others. They needed some teacher direction to do this more effectively. Pupils could identify favourite authors and books they had enjoyed reading. By P7, pupils could read unfamiliar texts very well. They could identify the intended audience for the piece of writing, make inferences, and identify similarities and differences between characters and themselves. They made good use of the school library to support their reading. At P4 to P7, pupils wrote well, and at an appropriate length, for a range of purposes. Their written work was consistently accurate, neat and tidy.

### **Mathematics**

Children in the nursery were making good progress in early mathematics. Most children could count with confidence, and sort and match objects by shape, size and colour. Children were beginning to use appropriate mathematical language correctly in play situations. In the primary classes, the overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Almost all pupils at the early stages, and most at the middle and upper stages, were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. Most pupils at the early stages were

achieving these levels earlier than might normally be expected, and attainment had been consistently high at these stages. Most pupils who were not achieving national levels were making good progress in their learning. Pupils could interpret a range of graphs appropriate to their stage. Older pupils had successfully carried out surveys as part of their work for the developing Eco group. They had used software, including spreadsheets and databases, skilfully to organise data and create graphs. Pupils could carry out calculations, including mental calculations, accurately in a variety of situations including situations involving money and measurement. At all stages, pupils knew the names of two- and three-dimensional shapes, and understood properties such as symmetry. They could work together very well to solve a wide range of mathematical problems. They showed a clear understanding of the strategies that were available, and why they had used the ones selected to solve particular problems.

## **5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?**

Overall, the way the school met pupils' learning needs was adequate. Children's learning needs in the nursery were well met. Staff in the nursery regularly observed children and noted their responses to play activities. Overall, staff made good use of the information gathered to plan for children's next steps in learning. Staff worked effectively with a range of support agencies. They had not yet developed appropriate care plans for a small number of children. At the primary stages, staff supported pupils well. In English language, they gave pupils useful information about what they needed to do to improve. Teachers did not consistently match tasks to pupils' abilities. They did not deploy the learning assistant effectively to support pupils' learning. School staff appropriately identified pupils who needed additional support in their learning. Aspects of the support given to these pupils were notable, such as the work of the multi-agency school liaison group, and the pupil support service. The support for learning teacher also gave highly effective support to individual pupils. An appropriate group of pupils had individualised educational programmes (IEPs). The IEPs were well reviewed by staff, parents and pupils, and were helping pupils to make very good progress in their learning.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>The school had very good approaches to promoting the health and wellbeing of pupils. Teachers knew all their pupils very well and consistently demonstrated a high degree of care and concern for them. Staff were aware of how to apply child protection procedures and monitored pupils' attendance carefully. Pupils had an appropriate knowledge of the dangers of drugs, and of the potential benefits of medicines. They could report any concerns to a member of staff, or to a playground buddy. The school's pupil comment book was well used by pupils to offer ideas and report concerns. The school cook and the pupil council had played a significant role in successfully promoting healthy eating throughout the school. Pastoral arrangements for the transfer from the nursery to P1 and from P7 to Culloden Academy were very effective.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was very good. The building was modern, well resourced and very well maintained. Pupils benefited from the use of a large games hall, and a well equipped computer suite. Arrangements for security and access for persons with restricted mobility were appropriate. The school grounds were well used for games and learning activities.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Climate and relationships in the school were very good. Staff, pupils and parents were proud of the school, which they saw as playing an important role in the community. Relationships between all members of the school community were very positive. Staff dealt very effectively with any incidents of challenging behaviour. The school promoted pupils' successes and achievements well through assemblies and wall displays, and in newsletters. Staff had consistently high expectations for pupils' behaviour and effort in class, and pupils responded well. The level of challenge of tasks set in class was not consistently high enough. The school had very good arrangements to ensure equality and fairness, and to promote pupils' awareness of a range of cultures. Staff had received appropriate training in race equality issues. They ensured that all pupils were treated fairly. Arrangements for religious observance were appropriate.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had good partnerships with parents and the community. Parents found staff approachable and welcoming. Newsletters, and reports to parents on their children's progress, were clear and informative. The parent council, which had also taken over responsibilities from the previous Parent-Teacher Association, was beginning to engage with its new role. School staff had not consulted parents on the school's health programme. Staff had not ensured that parents were clear on how they could support their children's learning. The school had very effective links with other agencies to support vulnerable children and their families. Local chaplains gave valuable support to the life of the school, particularly at assemblies.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Croy Primary School provided a safe, happy environment for children and pupils, which was valued by parents and the community. Pupils were very well behaved, and worked hard in school. Staff maintained very positive relationships with pupils. Staff had been successful to some extent in improving their approaches to teaching and assessing pupils' progress. There remained long-standing weaknesses in teaching approaches which reduced the pace of learning and hindered the progress of a few pupils. The school as a whole needed to do more in order to raise current levels of achievement and attainment.

The quality of leadership was good. At the time of the inspection the acting headteacher was in a short-term acting position. In his few months in the school he had identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. He had improved resources for technology and computing and his own teaching was a model of good practice. The acting headteacher had been successful in improving some aspects of learning and teaching throughout the school. Insufficient pace and challenge still remained a key weakness in too many lessons. This had been made known to staff, but they had not yet successfully addressed the issues. School staff monitored pupils' progress and attainment. This had identified where problems lay, but had not led to enough improvements. The programme for monitoring learning and teaching had not been sufficiently rigorous or systematic. Overall, the school's approaches to evaluating its work were adequate.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. At the last Care Commission inspection there were no recommendations and one requirement. This had been fully addressed.

**Main points for action**

The school and education authority should take action to improve attainment. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- improve the quality of teaching;
- improve the way staff meet pupils' learning needs; and
- monitor the quality of pupils' classroom experiences more systematically in order to ensure that the quality of learning and of attainment improve.

**What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Brian Stewart  
HM Inspector

22 January 2008

## Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

<b>How good are learning, teaching and achievement?</b>	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Pupils' attainment in English language	good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	very good
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	very good
Partnership with parents, the Parent Council, and the community	good

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Leadership of the acting headteacher	good
Self-evaluation	adequate

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

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

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<p><b>What parents thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What parents think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children found schoolwork stimulating and enjoyable.</li> <li>• The school had explained how parents could help their children with homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school could better explain their children's strengths and what they could do to improve.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pupils thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What pupils think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoyed being at school.</li> <li>• Teachers expected them to work hard, told them when they had done something well, and helped them when they had difficulties.</li> <li>• Pupils had a say in improving the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the behaviour of some pupils.</li> <li>• Improve arrangements for homework.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What staff thought the school did well</b></p>	<p><b>What staff think the school could do better</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff were very positive about all aspects of the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>

## **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 Education, Culture and Sport, 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).

### **HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure**

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail [HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk). A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: [ask@sps.org.uk](mailto:ask@sps.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.sps.org.uk](http://www.sps.org.uk).

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