

**Kingussie Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
18 December 2007**

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1. Background

Kingussie Primary School and Nursery Class was inspected in September 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 a group of parents¹ and representatives from the community. There was no Parent Council at the time of the inspection.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

The school serves the town of Kingussie and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 168, including 21 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Highly motivated nursery children and polite well behaved pupils who were eager to learn.
- Assistance provided for pupils with additional support needs.
- Staff's innovative approach to involving pupils in assessing their own and their peers' progress in learning.
- Staff teamwork and their approach to improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences.
- A very positive climate for learning.

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

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

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

Pupils, parents and staff were very positive about the primary and nursery class provision. Parents were pleased with almost all aspects of the nursery class and praised the quality of the arrangements for children starting nursery. Overall, they reported that they were very happy with the school. They were particularly pleased with the level of support provided to pupils who experienced difficulties in their learning. They valued the good relationships between staff and pupils and commented positively on how happy their children were in school. Parents were least pleased with the cramped nature of the accommodation and a small number considered the headteacher difficult to approach. Pupils appreciated the caring and happy environment created within school. They thought that teachers were both helpful and good at sorting out any incidents of bullying. Staff were happy with all aspects of school life. They all liked working in the school and found the pupils to be enthusiastic. All felt that the school was well led and that time for professional development was used effectively. They thought that they had good opportunities to contribute to decision making and that communication was effective. Parents, pupils and staff were all very complimentary about the janitor's contribution to enhancing the environment for learning.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall quality of the curriculum in the school and nursery class was good. Teachers provided pupils with a suitably broad range of learning experiences. Personal and social education permeated the curriculum well. Visiting teachers of music and physical education made valuable contributions to enhance the quality of pupils' experiences in expressive arts. In P3 and P4, pupils were being supported effectively in developing their drama skills by an outreach worker. Pupils were developing skills in citizenship and enterprise but the development of these skills was not yet planned systematically across the school. Pupils had benefited from an enhanced range of activities associated with the celebration of the Highland Year of Culture. Pupils were not yet receiving two hours of physical education each week in line with national recommendations. Staff did not yet integrate the use of information and communications technology (ICT) well enough in pupils' learning experiences. The overall quality of teaching was good. Children in the nursery were able to share, take turns and work together in groups effectively. They were encouraged to develop their own ideas through effective questioning from staff. Children engaged well in creative activities such as designing cars from junk and creating music. They were making good progress in developing skills through ICT and in physical development. They did not yet access books independently. Time for teaching in the nursery was not always maximised. The overall quality of teaching in the primary classes was good. A few teachers were very skilled practitioners. The support for learning teacher worked well with other teachers to develop pupils' learning. Most teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils, gave clear explanations and used questions effectively. Teachers

did not always summarise main points from lessons before moving to new work. A few teachers spent too long explaining work to be done leaving pupils insufficient time to be actively engaged in their own learning. Teachers' assessments of pupils' learning were not always accurate. Homework was being used appropriately.

In the nursery, children made very good use of activity areas to explore their own ideas and be actively involved in their learning. In the primary classes the quality of pupils' learning was good. There were some very good lessons. Most pupils enjoyed their learning, engaged enthusiastically and focused well on their coursework. They worked well on their own, in pairs and also in small groups. At nursery, P1 and P2 pupils were learning useful skills through well planned play activities and taking part in interesting and challenging practical experiences. At all stages, pupils reflected on both their own and others' learning. They offered appropriate feedback on what they liked and also on what could be improved. In particular, pupils at P7 were very skilled in offering practical advice to help their classmates' learning. In a few lessons, the pace of learning was not sufficiently brisk to ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress.

English language

In the nursery, children were making good progress in communication and language. They communicated clearly, listened attentively and made good use of the writing table. A few children were starting to write their names. In the primary classes, pupils' attainment in English language was good. Over the last three years, pupils' levels of attainment in writing had improved. Their progress in reading had declined. Throughout the school, most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and writing. A few achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Those who had additional support needs made appropriate progress in their coursework. At the early stages, pupils were making good progress in developing literacy skills. The school did not yet have a systematic way of assessing and recording pupils' progress in listening and talking. Most pupils listened well to information and instructions from adults and from other pupils. They expressed views and opinions with confidence and maturity. Pupils' progress in reading was good. By P7, pupils described books which they had read and enjoyed with enthusiasm. They were very reflective and asked challenging questions to each other about class novels. They were thoughtful in their responses. Pupils read for pleasure but also to find out useful information to assist them with other aspects of their coursework. At P7, pupils collated their written work very effectively into a class book. Pupils' progress in writing was good. A few pupils did not present their written work well or consistently use appropriate punctuation.

Mathematics

Children in the nursery were making very good progress in early mathematics. They were able to sort and match as well as count whilst playing games and were learning about simple weights through baking activities. In the primary classes, the quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Across the school, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in mathematics. There had been no trend in pupils' attainment over the last three years. At all stages, a few pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils were able to interpret information from an appropriate range of graphs. Pupils' skills in using ICT to support

their work in mathematics were not well developed. At P1 and P2, pupils were making steady progress in their early number skills. Pupils' work in mental calculation was not consistently quick and accurate, particularly in dealing with multiplication and division. Pupils across the school had a good level of understanding of money and measure and of the language used in these calculations. They were less confident in calculations involving decimals. Across the school, pupils had a good understanding of shape. By P7, pupils had a secure knowledge of angles and coordinates. At all stages, pupils were developing appropriate skills in problem solving and enquiry. However, pupils were not confident in identifying and applying these strategies effectively.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school had good arrangements to support nursery children and to meet pupils' learning needs. In the nursery, staff had recently developed new approaches to planning and recording children's learning to better meet their needs. These systems did not yet provide sufficient time for children to make their own choices. In the primary classes, teachers matched and adapted most activities appropriately to support pupils' learning. In a few lessons, higher attaining pupils were not always sufficiently challenged in their learning. The school had a well developed approach to identifying and assisting pupils with additional support needs working closely with parents, teachers, other agencies and support staff. The support for learning teacher was very effective in coordinating support for a range of pupils throughout the school. Pupils were making good progress towards meeting clear learning targets set out in individualised educational programmes. The school liaised effectively with various agencies, including occupational therapists and speech therapists, to assist staff in meeting pupils' learning needs. Parents responded well to good opportunities to be involved and were consulted in setting learning targets for their children and in reviewing progress. Support staff provided highly valuable additional assistance to groups and individuals. Staff knew pupils well and understood the range of their learning needs within each class.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>The school's arrangements for pastoral care were very good. Pupils cared for and supported one another. Staff followed school policies on child protection, racial incidents, safe use of the internet and anti-bullying to good effect. There was an annual update on child protection for staff but all staff had not yet been included. Staff promoted pupils' positive behaviour very well through a wide range of class initiatives. Pupils raised and shared personal concerns in class through circle time. The school's health programme addressed pupils' social, emotional and physical needs. It was enhancing pupils' understanding of substance misuse and personal safety. The school now need to review aspects of the sex education programme. Pupils' levels of physical activity were being effectively promoted by the Active Schools Coordinator and pupils were keen to take more of a lead in healthy eating initiatives. There were well-planned transitions programmes to support pupils entering nursery and P1 and for P7 pupils transferring to Kingussie High School. The school had achieved the highest level of authority award for a Health Promoting School.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of the accommodation was adequate. The school building had been renovated and refurbished and was clean and well maintained. Appropriate fencing and security gates ensured pupils' safety. There was a secure outdoor space for nursery children and a large well maintained grass field for pupils. Pupils benefited from a large general purpose area and separate gymnasium. Pupils' work was attractively displayed in classrooms and corridors. Access to parts of the building was difficult for persons with restricted mobility. Social spaces for pupils, staff working areas and storage spaces for equipment were inadequate. There were leaks in the roof of the area used by pupils to eat their packed lunches. Pupils' toilets required to be upgraded. The temperature within rooms varied and rotting window frames needed attention.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The climate and relationships within the school were very good. Nursery children and their families received a warm welcome. Staff morale was high and there was effective teamwork. Pupils were polite and responded well to staff's high expectations of their behaviour and work. They were very well behaved and had positive attitudes to learning. Expectations of more able pupils were not always consistently high. Pupils and staff identified strongly with the school and were proud to be associated with it. Pupils were encouraged to care for each other and there was mutual respect between pupils and staff. The school provided regular opportunities for religious observance. The school had an equalities policy which included a policy on racial equality. Not all staff had yet been trained in how best to promote this in practice. Staff worked hard to ensure that all pupils were fully included in the life of the school.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Partnerships were very good. The school kept parents aware of forthcoming events through regular informative newsletters. Nursery staff had close links with other local pre-school providers. Parents regularly helped in the nursery class and organised the library and story book bags. They had supportive links with the School Association, who had provided a shed for storing play equipment. Staff provided a comprehensive written end-of-year report and met with parents twice per year to discuss pupils' progress. They organised helpful curriculum workshops for parents to better equip them to support their children's learning. Parents were consulted appropriately on sensitive health issues such as personal relationships and sexual health. They were invited to assemblies, Highland games and end-of-term services to share in their children's achievements. There were productive links with local businesses and the countryside rangers to enhance pupils' learning experiences. The headteachers, of primary schools associated with Kingussie High School, met regularly to plan for greater continuity in pupils learning.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Kingussie Primary School and Nursery Class provided an effective education for its pupils in a very caring and supportive environment. Nursery staff were aware of the

requirements of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice. Teachers and support staff provided helpful encouragement to all pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. They worked well as a team and responded effectively to pupils' needs. Pupils were very well behaved, attaining well and making very good progress in their personal and social development. The quality of learning and teaching was good and staff were committed to continuous professional development. There was scope for further improvement in attainment in key areas of English language and mathematics. The school had not yet developed sufficiently consistent approaches to learning and teaching and to sharing best practice.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. Working with staff she had introduced a number of initiatives to extend pupils' learning experiences and had ensured that pupils were achieving well in a broad range of areas. She knew the school well, had taken difficult decisions when necessary and had provided clear direction to staff and pupils. The headteacher had personal credibility and demonstrated a high degree of professional competence based on wide ranging up-to-date knowledge and skills. She had encouraged and supported staff in their ongoing professional development. The headteacher and the recently appointed principal teacher formed an effective team and had the capacity, working with staff, to secure further improvements. The principal teacher had helped to increase the rigour of monitoring pupils' progress and had taken the lead in developing aspects of the school's work. Her teaching was a model of very good practice. The headteacher and principal teacher effectively monitored teachers' plans, observed classroom practice and provided helpful feedback to staff. They had introduced a more effective system for tracking individual pupils' attainment more closely. Plans were in place for continuing the more rigorous monitoring of pupils' work in the forthcoming session across a wide range of curricular areas. Through staff's continued involvement in these processes, the school was well placed to continue to improve its provision for pupils.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no recommendations and one requirement. The requirement related to safer recruitment practices, policies and procedures by the provider. This has been met.

Main points for action

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

- maximise the use of time for teaching and learning in the nursery;
- improve attainment in reading and mental calculation;
- ensure greater consistency in the quality of pupils' learning experiences by sharing best practice and further developing the use of information and communications technology to enrich learning; and
- with the involvement of all staff improve approaches to evaluating the work of the school.

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.

Donald Macleod
HM Inspector

18 December 2007

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.

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

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	adequate
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents and the community	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Self-evaluation	good

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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a good reputation in the community. • Staff showed care and concern for pupils and treated them fairly. • Children enjoyed being at school and found the work stimulating and challenging. • The school gave them helpful reports about their children's progress and parents' evenings were helpful and informative. • The school dealt effectively with inappropriate behaviour and there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a fifth of parents wanted more information about the school's priorities for improvement.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all pupils were pleased with all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff were pleased with all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

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, Longman East, Inverness IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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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. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at 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@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

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