

**Cawdor Primary School  
and Nursery Class  
The Highland Council  
2 September 2008**

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## 1. Background

Cawdor Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in April and May 2008 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 Cawdor and the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 123, including 17 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. The school was a recently opened purpose-built facility which included Cawdor Community Centre.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Courteous, friendly, cooperative primary pupils and nursery children.
- The strong sense of teamwork of all staff, who felt valued and included in the life of the school.
- Pupils' involvement in a broad range of activities and their successes in wider achievements.
- The high quality accommodation which provided a stimulating learning environment for all primary pupils and nursery children.

## 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.

Parents, including parents of children in the nursery class, were pleased with almost all aspects of the school. They thought that the buildings were kept in very good order and that staff showed concern for their children's care and welfare. They felt that the

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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.

school had a good reputation in the local community and was well led. Pupils thought that they got on well with other pupils and that teachers helped them when they had difficulty with their learning. Pupils who had been involved in a few incidents of bullying were confident in reporting this to staff. A significant minority of pupils did not think that the behaviour of other pupils in the school was good. Staff were very positive about working in the school and the nursery class. They thought that pupils were enthusiastic about their learning and that the school was well led.

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

##### **Learners' experiences**

The overall quality of the curriculum was good. Staff in the nursery class provided children with a broad and balanced curriculum. The majority of children engaged well with activities. Staff in the early stages of the primary school did not yet provide enough opportunities for active learning to ensure continuity and progression for nursery children. At the primary stages, teachers gave appropriate attention to developing pupils' skills in a number of areas including reading, information and communications technology (ICT) and physical education. Teachers had recently introduced a thematic approach to learning across the school. They were at the early stages of delivering a cross-curricular approach with planned links between areas of learning. Pupils had appropriate opportunities to develop skills in enterprise and citizenship. Staff in the nursery class interacted positively with children to support their learning. They did not make consistently effective use of questioning, discussion and dialogue to challenge children's thinking and extend their learning. At the primary stages, the quality of teaching was good with some examples of very effective practice. Almost all teachers organised and planned their lessons well. Pupils responded well when given the opportunity to work together in pairs and groups. Teachers gave clear explanations and instructions and were making effective use of ICT to support pupils in their learning. In several classes, pupils were given effective opportunities to ask questions and share with one another what they had learned. This practice was not yet consistent across all stages. In a number of areas, including mathematics and writing, the pace of learning was not fast enough.

Overall, children's experiences in the nursery were good and most children engaged with the activities and were motivated by them. Most children were cooperative during play. They did not have enough opportunities to initiate play and to be collaborative in their learning. Staff were beginning to use children's ideas, interests and concerns to influence planning. They had not yet used children's ideas and interests consistently to improve children's independent learning. At the primary stages, the quality of learners' experiences was good. Pupils were mostly motivated and keen to learn. The thematic approach to learning had ensured that pupils worked cooperatively together and regularly exchanged views in groups. Pupils responded positively to feedback on their learning and showed that they could take responsibility for their own learning. As yet, these approaches were not consistently embedded at all stages. Pupils were very confident in sharing their own views and enjoyed the opportunities to work collaboratively with others.

##### **Improvements in performance**

Overall, improvements in performance were good. The primary school and the nursery class had improved their performance in a number of areas.

Children in the nursery were making good progress in communication and language. Almost all were confident when talking to adults and to one another. They listened well to instructions and stories and the majority of children used the book corner independently. A few children were able to recognise the shape and sound of familiar letters and were beginning to write their own names. Pupils at the primary stages had achieved good standards in English language. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress. Most pupils listened well to adults and were confident in expressing their views and opinions. In reading, standards were showing significant improvement with most pupils attaining appropriate national levels. Across all stages, several pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils read a variety of texts appropriately fluently. At the early stages, pupils were making a good start in learning to read. In writing, the majority of pupils were attaining appropriate national standards. Pupils responded well to appropriate opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. Pupils did not receive sufficiently effective feedback from staff about how to improve their writing.

Children in the nursery were making satisfactory progress in early mathematics. The majority of children were able to count to ten confidently and a few were able to sort and match objects by shape, size and colour. Their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts was not sufficiently well developed during play activities. Across the primary stages, standards in mathematics were satisfactory. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels but attainment had fallen in recent years. For too many pupils, the pace of progress slowed as they progressed through the middle and upper stages. A few pupils at all stages were capable of achieving higher standards. Pupils who experienced difficulties with aspects of mathematics were well supported and most were making steady progress in their learning. Across the school, pupils could read a range of graphs well. Their information-handling skills using ICT were not sufficiently developed. At the early stages, most pupils showed a good understanding of number. By P7, most pupils were confident in mental calculations but were less accurate in written calculations. At the upper stages, pupils had difficulty when calculating change using money and carrying out practical measurements. Pupils' skills in practical aspects of mathematics and problem solving were not consistently well developed across the school.

Children in the nursery were making good progress in their learning and development. They were confident in role-play and dressed up and acted out roles in the imaginative play area. The Cawdor Forestry project provided effective opportunities for children to explore and enjoy the natural environment. In the outdoor area, children played energetically, gaining an appropriate awareness of space and safe practices in physical activity. Across the school, pupils were making good progress in aspects of physical education. At all stages, they were developing their knowledge of healthy living and making effective use of ICT to research information. Pupils from P5 to P7 were making very effective use of their mapping skills to assist them in their regular orienteering events.

Nursery and school staff were taking some good steps to encourage children and pupils' wider achievements. Children in the nursery were happy and confident and

were developing friendships. Pupils were knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles and healthy eating and were sharing this knowledge across the school. A group of pupils at P7 organised and managed a helpful weekly fitness club. Across the school, pupils were effectively developing their environmental awareness as part of the eco group. The school was working towards achieving an Eco-Schools Scotland award. Pupils across the school took responsibility for others through the pupil council, helping with the buddying scheme and acting as junior road safety officers. The annual residential activity for pupils in P7 provided a rich experience in which they developed effective personal and social skills. Pupils in the upper stages had developed their communication and teamwork skills through collaborating with other schools in the area on a local history project. Across the school, pupils benefited from a number of enterprise activities and confidently performed to parents, staff and the wider community. At P5 to P7, pupils participated enthusiastically and had consistently achieved success in the North of Scotland orienteering championships.

The school had made good progress in addressing the priorities in its improvement plan. A number of these priorities had impacted positively on pupils' experiences. For example, the thematic approach had encouraged teachers to provide more active learning activities for pupils and encouraged them to work more cooperatively. The introduction of the new reading programme had increased pupils' interest and motivation to read and was having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Overall, the school knew itself well and had identified appropriate areas for further improvement.

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

Overall, the nursery's approaches to meeting learning needs were good. Staff in the nursery observed children and noted their responses to play activities. They used assessment information appropriately to plan for children's learning. Some activities did not always provide sufficient challenge for all children and opportunities for children to explore and investigate were too limited. In most classes across the primary stages, teachers provided a range of appropriate tasks and activities. These were not always sufficiently challenging for all pupils. In writing and mathematics, staff needed to increase the pace of learning and challenge abler pupils appropriately. A range of support staff provided very effective assistance and support to pupils with additional support needs, particularly with their reading. The very effective support for learning teacher provided valuable advice to staff and very effective assistance to pupils. The support for learning teacher, class teachers, support staff and the headteacher consulted regularly and appropriately. These helpful consultations ensured that the needs of pupils with additional support needs were effectively addressed. Where necessary, appropriate individualised educational programmes and support plans were in place for pupils with additional support needs.

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

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The overall quality of care, welfare and development was good. In the nursery, staff were sensitive to children's physical, social and emotional needs. They were aware of their responsibility to protect children and to ensure a safe, secure environment for learning. At the primary stages, staff knew their pupils well and were sensitive to their emotional, social and medical needs. Staff were aware of child protection procedures and knew how to implement these. A few staff were not up to date with recent training. Appropriate procedures were in place for the administration of medicines and safe use of the Internet. Effective procedures were in place to check on the location of absent pupils. Pupils were represented on a number of committees but there was scope to improve their role in decision making. Staff and a range of partner agencies worked effectively together to support children and their families. The school had appropriate transition arrangements in place for pupils as they entered P1 and transferred from P7 to Nairn Academy.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The quality of accommodation was very good. The school and nursery were part of a high quality establishment which had opened in August 2007. There were good sized classrooms and very effective provision of space for the nursery class. Primary classrooms were bright and although display space was limited, staff had effectively displayed a wide range of pupils' work throughout the school. There was very good provision of ICT equipment and a wide range of well-organised resources to support pupils' learning. The building was well adapted to meet the needs of those with mobility difficulties. Appropriate security arrangements were in place and implemented. There was a good sized, well-equipped outdoor play space for nursery children. Across the school, pupils were keen that they should have greater access to the outside grassed areas. Parents made good use of the designated drop-off system to ensure that pupils could enter and leave the school safely.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	Staff in the nursery had created an environment where children and parents were made to feel welcome. All children were treated with equal concern. At the primary stages, staff, parents and pupils identified very positively with their school. They were very proud of their new facilities. Staff morale was high. All staff worked effectively as a team. They had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attendance but not sufficiently high expectations of pupils' attainment. Staff made effective use of school assemblies, displays and the local press to celebrate and share pupils' achievements. Pupils had a keen sense of equality and fairness in relation to school discipline and behaviour. Their wider understanding of equality issues was limited. An appropriate racial equality policy was in place. Across the nursery and the school, staff did not yet consistently promote and address issues of equality and diversity through the curriculum. Pupils participated in regular assemblies and appropriate religious observance activities.
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	Relationships between nursery staff and families were good. Staff had involved parents in their children's learning through the use of Fun Activity Packs and through the Cawdor Forestry project. There was scope to further develop parents' involvement in their children's learning and for staff to take appropriate account of children's learning at home. At the primary stages, the school successfully involved parents in a number of aspects of its work. The Parent Council was very supportive of the school. School events and parent meetings were well attended. A significant number of parents had offered their time and talents to assist in preparing the very successful Christmas show. Parents received regular newsletters and informative pupil reports. Staff consulted parents appropriately about sensitive health issues. The school had established positive partnerships with a number of neighbouring primary schools.

## 7. Leading and improving the school

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

Cawdor Primary School and Nursery Class provided a stimulating, welcoming and caring environment for learning. Staff felt well supported by the headteacher. Pupils were keen to learn and felt happy and safe. Pupils were involved in a range of activities which contributed to their wider achievements. Attainment in reading was

showing improvement but there was scope to improve pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics. With greater pace and challenge, pupils were capable of achieving more.

The headteacher provided good leadership. She had a clear sense of direction for future improvement and had established a strong sense of teamwork. With the support of staff she planned and managed the change to the new school very successfully. She had been successful in improving aspects of the school's work including reading, ICT and the themed approach to cross-curricular work. She now required to take a stronger lead in involving staff in improving pupils' attainment. The principal teacher carried out her remit effectively and gave good support to the headteacher and staff. Her teaching was a model of good practice. The school's approaches to improvement through self-evaluation were good. The headteacher regularly and effectively monitored the work of the school by observing lessons, monitoring teachers' plans and sampling pupils' work. The views of parents, pupils and staff had been sought and acted upon when reviewing the school aims. The headteacher and staff had not yet used attainment data rigorously or consistently enough to improve pupils' progress. With the continued support of the education authority, the school had the capacity for continued improvement.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no recommendations or requirements.

#### **Main points for action**

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

- improve attainment in writing and mathematics;
- increase pace and challenge and provide more opportunities for independent learning for primary pupils, and children in the nursery class; and
- continue to promote equality and diversity across the school and nursery curriculum.

### **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.

Isabel Robb  
HM Inspector

2 September 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>	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Children's experiences (nursery class)	good
Learners' experiences (primary stages)	good
Improvements in performance (nursery class)	good
Improvements in performance (primary stages)	good

<b>How well are pupils' learning needs met?</b>	
Meeting learning needs (nursery class)	good
Meeting learning needs (primary stages)	good

<b>How good is the environment for learning?</b>	
Care, welfare and development	good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	very good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	satisfactory
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good

<b>Leading and improving the school</b>	
Developing people and partnerships	good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Improvement through 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
satisfactory	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.

<b>What parents thought the school did well</b>	<b>What parents think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff made them feel welcome.</li> <li>• The school was well led.</li> <li>• Their children enjoyed being at school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school could do more to help children work to the best of their ability.</li> <li>• The school could give parents better information about the school's priorities for improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>What pupils thought the school did well</b>	<b>What pupils think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers expected them to work hard.</li> <li>• Teachers checked their homework.</li> <li>• Teachers told them when they had done something well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pupils' behaviour.</li> <li>• Involve pupils more in the decision-making processes and let them have a greater say in how to improve the school.</li> <li>• Ensure that all pupils are treated equally and fairly.</li> </ul>
<b>What staff thought the school did well</b>	<b>What staff think the school could do better</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff were very positive about all aspects of school life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant issues.</li> </ul>

### **Appendix 3 Good practice**

In the course of the inspection, the following aspects of effective practice were evaluated as being worthy of wider dissemination.

#### **Involving staff, parents and pupils in redefining the school aims**

With the move to a new building and the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence*, staff had identified the need to review and define the school's aims.

It was agreed that all pupils, staff and parents would be involved in the consultation process and contribute to the school's aims. The school worked hard to raise the profile and understanding of the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence* in order that the school aims could fit alongside these. After a substantial consultation period, three brief aims linked to each of the four capacities of successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens were agreed.

Children are now more aware of the school aims and their meaning to each pupil in their daily life at school. Parents, pupils and staff have a shared view and ownership of these aims.

## **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 & 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee, DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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@spsa.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsa.org.uk). More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: [www.spsa.org.uk](http://www.spsa.org.uk).

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