

**Rosebank Primary School
and nursery class
Nairn
The Highland Council
2 October 2007**

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1. Background

Rosebank Primary School and nursery class were inspected in May 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 School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

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 north-western area of the town of Nairn. At the time of the inspection the roll was 500, including 55 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 above the national average. The communication centre within the school provided for ten pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils in the communication centre came from within and beyond the school's catchment area.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- In the nursery, the high-quality learning experiences provided by staff, and children's excellent progress in communication and language.
- At P1 to P7, well-motivated and cooperative pupils.
- The help provided to pupils by support for learning staff and the children's services worker.
- The level of attention given to the care and welfare of pupils.
- The very effective inclusion of pupils from the communication centre and from minority cultural and ethnic groups in mainstream classes and the life of the school.

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.

Parents were positive about the school. Almost all felt it was well led and had a good reputation in the local community. They thought their children enjoyed school and were well looked after by staff. A few reported that they did not find some teachers welcoming or helpful. Some wanted more information about their children's progress, classwork and homework, and about the school's priorities for improvement. Pupils were pleased with almost all aspects of the school, particularly the way teachers helped them in class. A minority reported being bullied and felt that pupils did not behave well. However, most were confident that staff would deal effectively with reported cases of bullying. A few felt that some teachers would not listen to them if they were upset. Staff enjoyed working in the school. Teachers wanted to see improvements in leadership and discipline. The majority of staff did not think senior managers worked well as a team.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum was adequate overall. In the nursery, children benefited from a very good range of play experiences which challenged and extended their learning and captured their interest. Learning through play continued to be a strength when pupils transferred to P1. At the primary stages, the majority of the curriculum was well developed. The structure of the school day provided too little teaching time for pupils at P1 to P3. Staff were implementing the education authority's literacy project effectively to help raise attainment in reading. Work in mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) enabled pupils to make steady progress. Pupils had too few opportunities to apply their skills in writing and to use ICT across the curriculum. They had good opportunities to develop skills of enterprise at all stages. Their skills in the expressive arts and technology were not developed systematically enough. Too little time was given to physical education (PE). The curriculum in the communication centre was suitably broad, with good attention given to pupils' personal and social development. All pupils from the centre were included, as appropriate, in mainstream classes for a range of activities, including mathematics, art and design, drama and PE. Teaching across the school was good overall. In the nursery, staff interacted very effectively with children. At other stages, teachers varied their approaches well and related positively to their classes in almost all cases. All teachers provided clear instruction and explanations. The quality of teachers' interactions with pupils varied widely from excellent to weak. A few teachers used questioning very skilfully, prompting pupils to explain their answers. Too few teachers routinely shared clearly with pupils what they expected them to learn and summarised lessons effectively. In English language, they provided very helpful feedback to pupils about their writing. Teachers used homework effectively to support pupils' learning.

The quality of pupils' learning was good. In the nursery, children were very active in their learning. They regularly explored the natural environment. They planted and monitored the growth of seeds. Most showed confidence as they investigated technological equipment, including programmable toys, metal detectors, digital microscopes and the computer. Children were independently expressive, creative and inventive in art, craft and role-play opportunities. They were developing good control of their fingers and hands and had daily opportunities to be energetic both in the gymnasium and out-of-doors. In most lessons at P1 to P7, pupils were very attentive, well motivated and responsive, and learned at a steady pace. In a few lessons, they lost motivation because the task lacked challenge or did not sustain their interest. Pupils usually responded well to the frequent opportunities they had to work together in pairs or small groups. In mathematics at P1 and P3, for example, pupils collaborated effectively to invent sums and solve problems involving money. In science at P5, they observed and discussed the effects of curved mirrors. Pupils benefited from some effective opportunities to develop independence in learning. At P7, for example, they edited their writing systematically, gathered new vocabulary, and researched interesting aspects of ancient Egypt. In some classes, pupils' independence was restricted because lessons were over-directed by the teacher.

Nursery children showed confidence, independence and perseverance in their play environment. They were kind and considerate and had formed friendships. At P1 to P7, almost all pupils were polite and cooperative. In the communication centre, pupils were developing their personal and social skills very well against clearly-set targets. The school took good steps to develop pupils' wider achievements. Pupils at P7, including a few from the communication centre, tried new sports and developed their social skills through a successful residential outdoor experience. Up to one in six of pupils enhanced their physical fitness by attending various after-school activities organised by the Active Schools Coordinator. Others had competed at local level in cross-country and swimming. Pupils at P6 were very actively involved in planning and promoting safer walking routes to school. At all stages, pupils took part in a number of creative enterprise projects to raise money for charities. They participated in community and cultural events. At P7, they had performed in a successful school show as part of the Highland Year of Culture. Pupils were encouraged to become responsible citizens by participating in a number of local projects such as the community arts festival and Christmas lights parade.

English language

Children in the nursery were making excellent progress in communication and language. They spoke confidently, listened well to stories and could recall the sequence of events. Children recognised their name in print and could write it. They made full use of the excellent opportunities to develop their interest in early writing. At P1 to P7, attainment was good. In recent years, improved standards in writing had been sustained. Standards in reading had not improved significantly. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in reading and writing. A significant minority were exceeding these levels. The school could not provide reliable records of attainment in listening and talking. Most pupils who required additional support were making appropriate progress towards their learning targets. Records kept for pupils in the communication centre provided too little information about their progress. At all

stages, pupils listened well to their teacher and each other. Most expressed their views clearly in group discussions, particularly at the upper stages. Most read well and for a variety of purposes. At P1 to P3, pupils were making a very good start to their reading. The majority at P6 and P7 read widely for pleasure and information. Pupils were developing their knowledge about language well. At P1 to P4, most were becoming confident, independent writers. Those at P5 to P7 produced a broad range of descriptive and imaginative writing. By P7, they used language and punctuation effectively. Pupils showed insufficient knowledge of poetry and Scots language. Standards of handwriting and presentation were not always high enough.

Mathematics

Children in the nursery were making very good progress in their understanding of early mathematical concepts, such as matching, sorting, making comparisons and counting. They counted confidently in play situations and most recognised simple numbers. Most children recognised basic shapes and solved problems confidently during construction activities with small and large pieces. At P1 to P7, attainment was good. A high standard of attainment had been maintained in recent years. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. A significant minority were exceeding these levels. Pupils sustained a good rate of progress as they moved through the stages. Most pupils requiring additional support were making appropriate progress in work suited to their needs. Records kept for pupils in the communication centre provided too little information about their progress. At the early stages, the pace of progress for a few pupils was too slow. Most pupils interpreted graphs and tables effectively. By the upper stages, they showed well-developed skills in using computers to process and display data. Most pupils performed written and mental calculations well, although their ability to apply quick mental strategies varied between classes. Pupils coped well with most tasks involving fractions and decimals, and with the majority of tasks involving measurement. A minority had difficulty working with volume and estimating length. At the upper stages, pupils showed appropriate knowledge of shapes, compass directions and coordinates. In problem-solving and enquiry, pupils tackled most problems systematically.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Arrangements for meeting children's and pupils' learning needs were good overall. Nursery staff challenged and stimulated children's thinking very effectively. They supported and developed children's individual needs and interests well and planned appropriate next steps in their learning. At P1 to P7, teachers, classroom assistants and auxiliaries supported pupils well. Class teachers met the needs of different groups of pupils effectively in English language and mathematics. They did not consistently challenge higher-attaining pupils in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils' learning at P1 was not yet building sufficiently on their achievements in nursery. Support for learning staff provided very good support for pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning. They worked closely with class teachers to provide effective individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for the small number of pupils with additional support needs. A few pupils in the nursery required IEPs to ensure their progress. Specialist support for pupils with English as an additional language was very limited, although teaching staff provided a good level of support overall. The children's services worker

provided high-quality support to several families, making important contributions to meeting the learning needs of specific pupils. A deputy headteacher effectively coordinated the work of various professionals and support agencies to maximise learning opportunities for pupils with additional support needs.

In the communication centre, staff had a very good understanding of the significant additional support needs of pupils. Teachers and auxiliaries worked well together to match activities to pupils' individual needs. In English language and mathematics, some activities did not take sufficient account of the next steps required to improve the attainment of individual pupils. A few of the pupils in the communication centre would benefit from more challenging mental mathematics activities.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Overall, staff provided a very good level of care for children and pupils. Pupils felt safe in the school and were confident they could discuss sensitive issues with most staff. Effective arrangements were in place to deal with child protection issues. The administration of medicines was very well organised. Arrangements for supervising pupils and responding to any concerns they had about bullying were very effective. The personal and social education of pupils covered important aspects of healthy and safe living, including personal safety, relationships and substance misuse. The school strongly promoted healthy eating habits amongst pupils. Well-developed arrangements were in place for the transfer of P7 pupils to Nairn Academy, including those with additional support needs.</p> <p>Arrangements for the transfer of nursery children to P1 were being further developed to include the use of P6 'buddies' for children.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation was good. Most parts of the building were well maintained and appropriate security arrangements were in place. Teaching areas, including the nursery, were pleasant, spacious, bright and airy. The well-equipped gymnasium and ICT suite were assets, although the lack of a school library was a disadvantage. ICT facilities in the communication centre were too limited. Users with restricted mobility had access to the ground floor only. The nursery entrance area was small and became congested at times. School dining facilities were inadequate. Outdoor play areas were extensive and included a climbing wall. Some play areas were very rough-surfaced. The nursery play area was not fully enclosed to ensure children's safety.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Overall, pupils behaved very well. They related positively to teachers in nearly all lessons. Assemblies were very positive occasions, providing appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Tensions existed between some staff. The clear procedures for ensuring pupil discipline were not always implemented effectively by all staff. Teachers usually set high expectations of pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics, but less consistently in other areas. They used praise and rewards effectively to encourage pupils, and celebrated their various achievements. Most pupils felt they were treated fairly by staff. Pupils from the communication centre and those with minority cultural and ethnic backgrounds were very well included in classes and in the life of the school. Teachers were mostly positive about including pupils with behavioural difficulties. Not all staff were trained in racial equality. The school did not prepare pupils sufficiently for life in a multi-cultural society.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Parents found most staff welcoming. The school had some very good approaches to communicating with parents, including frequent newsletters and an open evening. Parents received a summary of the school's priorities for improvement. The headteacher was very responsive to parents' enquiries. Parents felt that written reports on their children's progress came too late in the school session. These reports included helpful advice on how parents could assist with aspects of their children's learning. The use of educational jargon made some reports less helpful. Parents received only limited advice about classwork and homework. They were kept well informed about the teaching of sensitive health education matters. The school benefited from a very active School Board and PTA. There were few regular parent helpers in the school. Links with neighbouring schools were strong. Close links with local organisations, businesses and visitors to the school enhanced pupils' learning and the school's profile in the community.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Overall, staff at Rosebank Primary School provided a good standard of education for pupils, and a very good standard of pastoral care. Almost all pupils were well behaved and cooperative. Staff in the nursery provided high-quality learning experiences for children. At P1 to P7, teaching was predominantly good but ranged widely in quality. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was good. Some other areas of the curriculum were not sufficiently well planned to ensure that all pupils achieved their potential. This included some aspects of planning in the communication centre.

The education authority recognised that the school currently had too few managerial posts for its size, resulting in considerable pressure on the three senior managers. The headteacher provided adequate leadership. He was highly committed to pupils' welfare and well regarded by many parents. He consulted staff openly. Under his leadership, staff had raised attainment in writing and mathematics, improved pastoral care and overall standards of pupil behaviour. Communication and approaches to quality assurance had also been improved. Despite these improvements, teachers lacked confidence in the leadership of the school. The headteacher had not explained clearly enough to staff his vision for improving the school or the decisions taken by senior managers. Occasionally, pupil indiscipline was not handled decisively and effectively enough. Leadership across the school was adequate. Senior managers had not been successful in motivating all staff to take responsibility for moving the school forward. Teamwork at the primary stages was fragmented. Currently, few staff served on any school development groups. A few teachers were very reluctant to support decisions

made by the senior management team. These factors restricted the school's capacity for improvement. The headteacher and two deputy headteachers worked very well together. The deputy headteachers fulfilled their remits effectively, making important contributions to pupil support, curriculum development, pupil behaviour and quality assurance. The nursery coordinator teacher ensured effective staff teamwork in the nursery. Approaches to school self-evaluation were good. The headteacher involved staff well in evaluating key aspects of the school's work. Senior managers examined teachers' plans and samples of pupils' work. They carefully tracked pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and monitored pupils' behaviour. They observed lessons to evaluate key aspects of learning and teaching and provided helpful feedback to teachers. Due to weaknesses in overall teamwork, however, improvements to learning and teaching were not being implemented consistently across all classes. Senior managers gave too little attention to monitoring practice in the nursery and communication centre.

Nursery staff were knowledgeable about the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice and their implications for the nursery. At the last Care Commission inspection there were no recommendations and one requirement which had yet to be fully implemented. This related to the enclosure of the outdoor play area for nursery children.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve aspects of the curriculum, leadership, staff relationships, teamwork and accommodation. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- increase the time spent teaching pupils at P1 to P3 and on physical education for pupils at P1 to P7;
- ensure that pupils develop their learning more progressively in the expressive arts and technology, and apply their writing and information and communication technology skills more extensively;
- provide consistent high quality in teaching and learning to ensure that more pupils attain their potential across the curriculum as a whole;
- adjust pupils' experiences in the communication centre to take greater account of their next steps in learning;
- improve working relationships, teamwork and leadership amongst staff at all levels; and
- complete the enclosure of the outdoor play area for nursery children.

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.

Dr Tom Straiton
HM Inspector

2 October 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	adequate
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	good
Climate and relationships	adequate
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	adequate
Leadership across the school	adequate
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 local community. • Staff made them feel welcome in the school. • Their children enjoyed being at the school and were treated fairly. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About a quarter of parents wanted more information about the school's priorities for improving pupils' education.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly, helped them when they found work difficult, and checked their homework. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could, and told them when they had done something well. • The school helped them to stay safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just over a third of pupils felt that pupils could be better behaved.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They liked working in the school. • Teachers ensured that pupils received constructive feedback about their work. • Pupils' success was regularly celebrated. • Staff showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • They were aware of the school's child protection procedures. • The school dealt effectively with any bullying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most teachers wanted to see better leadership of the school. • The majority of staff wanted senior managers to operate more effectively as a team. • The majority of teachers wanted indiscipline to be dealt with more effectively. • The majority of non-teaching staff wanted their staff training time to be used more effectively.

How can you contact us?

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