

**Mosstodloch Primary School
The Moray Council
8 June 2004**

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1. Background

Mosstodloch Primary School was inspected in March 2004 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school and the environment for learning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation. They 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. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, and a representative of the parent-teacher support group, Friends of Mosstodloch Primary School.

The school serves the village of Mosstodloch and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 231. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Courteous and well-behaved pupils.
- The range and variety of extra curricular activities.
- The quality of pastoral care.
- A hardworking and dedicated staff.
- The effective promotion of equality and fairness.

3. Views of parents and carers, pupils and staff

Almost all parents expressed support for the school and most were very pleased with its work. Parents and carers felt that they needed more information about the work of the school and how pupils' needs were met. Pupils thought that if they had worries they would be listened to and helped. They were pleased to be given responsibilities but would have liked a greater say in influencing the work of the school. Staff were pleased with the support they received from senior management and with the opportunities they had to discuss the future direction of the school.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The school had put in place a good curriculum which provided a good range of activities in each curricular area to help pupils achieve good standards. The extensive range of enterprise activities and the very good attention paid to personal and social development were having a positive impact on pupils. Class teachers and visiting specialist teachers worked well together to provide good quality experiences in the expressive arts which helped pupils achieve well in music, physical education and art and design. The headteacher had identified weaknesses in reading and writing and had put improvements in place. Teachers were making good progress in implementing these improvements which had yet to impact fully on pupils' learning. They had not yet, however, placed sufficient emphasis on pupils' use of their literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum to help raise attainment in English language and mathematics.

The overall quality of teaching was good. In the majority of classes there were examples of vibrant teaching in English language and mathematics. In these lessons, the very good direct teaching linked to skilled exposition by teachers gave pupils a rewarding experience. In most classes, teaching was sound with good direct questioning and an effective use of praise. Most teachers gave pupils helpful advice on the best learning strategies to use, taking good account of the nature of the tasks. The overall quality of learning was good. Staff used information and communications technology imaginatively and through this were successful in enhancing pupils' learning. Pupils were highly motivated in most classes, paid close attention and listened carefully to instructions. Almost all were hardworking, conscientious and keen to learn. In a few classes, independent working was strongly promoted and achieved. However, the pace of learning varied too greatly across the school and, as a result, not all pupils made steady progress in developing their skills and knowledge systematically from stage to stage.

The very good arrangements for pupils' personal and social development had effectively supported pupils to become confident and courteous. The clear emphasis the school placed on promoting playground games and physical fitness contributed strongly to developing pupils' positive attitudes towards healthy living. Senior pupils actively supported younger pupils through a buddy system. School teams and groups participated enthusiastically in competitions and events such as the annual P7 residential ski-trip and the Gordonstoun challenge at a neighbouring school. The school effectively celebrated pupils' achievements in well-presented displays of their work and in frequent newsletters to parents. At all stages, pupils participated enthusiastically in a wide range of stimulating enterprise activities and developed many useful skills. Pupils responded very well to opportunities to be creative. Their skills in music making, physical education and art and design were a notable feature of the school.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was fair. Standards in reading and writing had fluctuated over the last three years and remained below national

averages. There was no overall trend of improvement. A majority of pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing and most achieved these levels in listening and talking. Most pupils' performance in their course work was good. Almost all spoke clearly and confidently and showed a good sense of audience. They had very good listening skills and used these to gather and note information. Although most pupils read well for information, they did not read a sufficiently wide range of fiction. At the early stages, the majority of pupils made steady progress in their writing, but from P4 onwards did not write at length for a sufficiently wide range of purposes. A few imaginative pieces were of good quality with a good use of expressive phrases. At all stages, pupils' knowledge of English grammar was good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. In recent years pupils' attainment in mathematics had remained steady. Most pupils were making good progress with their classwork. Almost all pupils at the early stages and most at the middle and upper stages were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in all aspects of mathematics. At all stages, pupils had good skills in mental and written calculation. From the early stages pupils were able to interpret information effectively from a range of graphs. At the upper stages, pupils had a sound knowledge of the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes and used grids and co-ordinates well. They also used computers skilfully to create bar charts and spreadsheets. In problem-solving and enquiry the majority of pupils tackled problems systematically, but a few were unsure of the best strategy to use to solve mathematical problems.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Staff knew pupils well as individuals and were sensitive to their needs. They were strongly committed to ensuring pupils' social and emotional well-being. The school had a clear policy on bullying and had appropriate arrangements, developed in line with advice from the education authority, for child protection and emergency procedures. Staff dealt effectively with any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying. The school's recently revised health education programme gave appropriate attention to drugs education and the development of a healthy lifestyle.

The support for learning teachers, headteacher and depute headteacher gave good support to pupils who were experiencing difficulties in their learning. Other support staff capably gave help at all stages. Good quality individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were in place for pupils with specific difficulties. These contained appropriate short-term learning targets and set out clearly how success was to be measured. Appropriate procedures were in place for maintaining and reviewing Records of Needs. The school had very good arrangements for supporting pupils at times of transition, for example when entering P1, moving from P3 to P4 and when transferring to secondary school. The school's arrangements for bringing together pupils in groups of similar abilities to teach English language and mathematics were beginning to have a positive impact on attainment. However, not all teachers provided sufficient challenge or support for all pupils. Teachers did not always make effective

use of national assessment items to identify pupils' differing needs or confirm their judgements of pupils' progress at appropriate times.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	The overall quality of accommodation and facilities was fair. Classrooms were bright and well-decorated and in some classes the display of artefacts and pupils' work provided a stimulating learning environment. Pupils made very good use of playground games and other activities at interval and lunchtime to support their learning and leisure activities. Aspects of the school's security arrangements required review. The quality of heating in classrooms varied from being excessively hot to very cold. The lack of road markings to alert drivers of vehicles to the presence of the school was a potential hazard to pupils.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	There was a very welcoming atmosphere in classrooms and staff and pupil morale was high. Pupils were polite, courteous and well behaved. The school was very highly regarded by pupils, staff and parents. There was as yet no pupil council and staff did not consult sufficiently with pupils about improving the school. Staff promoted high expectations of good behaviour in school and of achievement in extra-curricular activities. However, their expectations for pupils' attainment at several stages in reading and writing were too low. Teachers used praise well to motivate and encourage pupils. Pupils clearly demonstrated values of tolerance and respect to those of different cultures by welcoming them to the school and celebrating diversity in school assemblies.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had a very strong partnership with parents and the local community. The Friends of Mosstodloch Primary School were highly effective in supporting the school through fund-raising and other activities. The school invited members of the community to attend the weekly assemblies. The school welcomed parents and encouraged their involvement in their children's education. Staff responded effectively to parental enquiries. Parents' evenings were well-organised and levels of attendance were very high. The school distributed frequent and detailed newsletters to all parents and interested members of the community. Parents had very good opportunities to become involved in the work of the school and to support their children in

	extra-curricular activities.
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7. Improving the school

The school had made good progress towards creating an environment which encouraged hard work and commitment. The system of recording pupils' progress and achievements was well-organised. However, teachers did not always make effective use of national assessments to confirm their judgements and to predict pupils' achievements. As a result some pupils did not make appropriate progress.

The headteacher provided good leadership. She had recognised the weaknesses in the school's performance and in her time in post had initiated a range of improvements. These included the revision of key policies and programmes in English language and mathematics. She had raised most teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement. She was highly committed to the school and was well respected by pupils, staff and parents. Her extensive knowledge of the pupils enabled her to support their personal and social development very well. The depute headteacher provided very strong support to the headteacher and fulfilled her remit effectively. Arrangements for quality assurance were good. There was a good programme of continuous professional development. Teachers had used national quality indicators to audit the school's work and had used their evaluations to draw up an improvement plan. The plan's priorities were well-chosen and focussed clearly on improving attainment. The headteacher scrutinised teachers' forward plans and gave oral and written feedback. She and her depute had made a good informal start to monitoring learning and teaching. However, these arrangements were not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure appropriate pace and challenge in all classes.

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

- improve attainment in reading and writing;
- review the timing and use of national assessment items;
- ensure that the needs of all pupils are consistently met; and
- improve approaches to monitoring learning and teaching to ensure appropriate pace and challenge at all stages.

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 and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Duncan MacQuarrie
HM Inspector

8 June 2004

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community

We judged the following to be good

- The teaching process
- Structure of the curriculum
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Meeting pupils' needs

We judged the following to be fair

- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Accommodation and facilities

We judged the following to be unsatisfactory

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

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

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment. • The school encouraged their children to work to the best of their ability. • Their children were treated fairly in the school. • There was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • The school attended promptly to their concerns. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the school's priorities for improvement.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly, helped them when they had difficulties with their class work, and told them when they had done something well. • Teachers expected them to work as hard as they could and checked their homework. • The school kept them safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of a few pupils.

What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership of the headteacher. • Effective approaches to preventing bullying. • The mutual respect between staff and pupils and pupils' enthusiasm for learning. • The high standards set for pupils' attainment and behaviour and for the care and welfare of pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff had no significant concerns.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Educational Services, 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.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8LG. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from that office and on our website.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman directly or through your member of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. She will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, she will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right if we can.

Complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman must be submitted within 12 months of the date of publication of this report.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

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