

**Milne's High School
Fochabers
The Moray Council
15 January 2008**

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1. Background

Milne's High School was inspected in September 2007 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. HM Inspectors evaluated how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, taking into account the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met by the curriculum and teaching. They also analysed pupils' attainment in national examinations (see Appendix 3), the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. Inspectors focused particularly on English, mathematics, history, and chemistry and S1/S2 science.

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

HM Inspectors observed teaching, learning and achievement in lessons and other contexts and examined pupils' work. They analysed responses to questionnaires¹ issued to a sample of parents² and pupils and to all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils, including representatives of pupil councils, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council and a group of parents.

Milne's High School is a non-denominational school serving the communities of Fochabers, Mosstodloch, Lhanbryde, Urquhart, Garmouth and Spey Bay. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 625. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average. The headteacher and the principal teacher of English were absent during the inspection.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Confident, mature pupils with a positive attitude to learning.
- Effective opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- The high regard in which the school was held by the community.
- Staff approaches to the care and welfare of all pupils.

3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?

To evaluate how well the school was raising achievement for all, HM Inspectors considered the extent to which the learning needs of all pupils were met through the curriculum and

¹ See Appendix 2

² Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

teaching. They evaluated the effectiveness of the school in promoting the learning and personal development of all pupils in lessons and in other, broader contexts. They also considered the standards attained in specific aspects of learning.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum was weak. Staff provided pupils with a broad and balanced range of experiences at most stages. They had not developed an appropriate rationale based on effective consultation with stakeholders or evaluated how well the curriculum met pupils' needs. Particular features of the curriculum included the following.

- Timetabling arrangements were not always effective in delivering the curriculum.
- The personal and social education (PSE) programme covered a broad range of topics. Drama companies and speakers made effective contributions to the programme.
- In S1, teachers did not build effectively on pupils' previous learning in primary schools.
- Provision for core physical education (PE) met pupils' needs at S1 but was insufficient from S2 to S6. There were no plans in place to meet the recommendation of two hours PE for all pupils by August 2008.
- Through the Skills for Work initiative, S3 and S4 pupils were developing vocational skills at Moray and Banff and Buchan Colleges.
- Small groups of S3 and S4 pupils with particular needs followed appropriate courses through Skillforce.
- The lack of choice in the S5/S6 curriculum adversely affected pupils' progress and motivation.
- The S5/S6 curriculum did not provide an element of religious and moral education.
- Arrangements for curricular and vocational guidance were effective.
- Individual staff were introducing effective enterprise activities into coursework.

Teaching and meeting pupils' needs

The overall quality of teaching was good. Most teachers delivered well-planned lessons using a variety of resources. Almost all teachers shared the content of lessons with pupils and in the most effective lessons, they also shared the purpose. Their explanations were clear and developed pupils' understanding very well. Almost all teachers interacted very effectively with pupils. In a few classes, teachers used skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. A few teachers included a helpful review of learning at the end of lessons. Across the school, homework was not used effectively to consolidate learning.

Overall, most tasks and activities were appropriate for the majority of pupils. A few subject departments arranged the composition of classes to meet pupils' needs more effectively. The

school had introduced of a range of Access 2 and 3 courses to provide more relevant courses for a few pupils. Subject teachers did not provide sufficient materials adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. In particular, they did not challenge more able pupils effectively, or provide sufficiently supportive materials for less able pupils. Support for learning staff were highly effective in identifying and providing strategies for pupils with additional support needs. They provided high-quality support to individuals and small groups both in mainstream classes and in groups withdrawn from class for this purpose. The school had strong pastoral links with primary schools and the well-structured transition programme ensured very good planning for pupils with significant needs. Pupils were making good progress in their learning through individualised educational programmes (IEPs). School staff developed appropriate IEP targets with pupils and their parents, and reviewed these targets regularly to determine appropriate pupils' next steps in learning. Subject teachers were not involved in setting targets in the IEPs. Overall, arrangements to ensure that pupils' learning needs were met were adequate.

Learning and personal development

The quality of learning was good. Almost all pupils were well behaved, hardworking and keen to do well. They worked very effectively in pairs and groups. In a few classes, pupils took responsibility for their own learning, for example, by carrying out research using the Internet. A few departments used information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to support pupils' learning. Pupils showed considerable enthusiasm when using interactive whiteboards in their learning. At times, the pace of learning was too slow for pupils to make effective progress. In too many classes, teachers' expectations of pupils were too low and learning did not build on prior attainments. Supported study classes were of good quality and popular with pupils. The school librarian provided very good support to enhance pupils' learning.

Overall, the quality of pupils' personal and social development was very good. Almost all pupils were mature, confident individuals who showed care and concern for others. Pupils gained leadership and teamworking skills through their participation in a wide range of activities. These included acting as house captains, working towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and taking part in World Team Challenge. Pupils developed confidence and gained resilience through residential experiences in S3 and S6. Pupils in S5/S6 were further developing their communication skills by supporting younger pupils in classes and through tutor groups. The Young Enterprise team demonstrated creativity by producing maps showing the location of Moray golf courses and local distilleries. The school-based *Fochabers Fiddlers* had achieved international acclaim for their fiddle playing. Pupils' health and well-being benefited from the wide range of out-of-school hours sporting activities.

English

Teachers explained new work clearly but did not always share the learning objectives with pupils. In a few classes, they questioned pupils very effectively to enhance their understanding. Almost all pupils concentrated closely on their learning tasks but the pace of learning varied across classes. Teachers did not make effective use of assessment information to provide consistently appropriate work for all pupils.

Teaching was good. Overall, the quality of learning, meeting needs and attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- At S1/S2, most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and the majority attained these levels in listening, talking and writing.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils attaining Credit awards at Standard Grade was below the national average. Pupils performed less well in English than in their other subjects.
- At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils entered for Higher was below the national average. The proportion achieving grades A-C overall was in line with the national average and improving. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A-C at Intermediate 1 and 2 were respectively in line with and above the national average.

Mathematics

Teachers gave clear explanations and used questioning effectively to involve pupils and monitor their understanding. At times, questions could have challenged pupils more to think for themselves. Teachers made systematic use of homework and increasingly effective use of ICT in lessons. Pupils worked purposefully and participated well in lessons. They had regular experience of applying problem-solving skills and working together, particularly in S1/S2. Teachers were becoming more successful in ensuring that work was well matched to pupils' needs by building more effectively on their prior learning.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good. The arrangements to meet pupils' needs and the overall quality of attainment were adequate although with some signs of improvement. Particular features included the following.

- By the end of S2, the majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels but few attained beyond this level.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils attaining Credit awards was below the national average.
- At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils presented for Higher had been low but the performance of those presented was above the national average. Most candidates for Advanced Higher, Intermediate 2 and Intermediate 1 attained A-C awards.

Chemistry and S1/S2 science

Teachers provided clear explanations and instructions. Most teachers shared the purpose of lessons with pupils. There was some very good use of questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and develop understanding. Almost all pupils were well behaved and on task. Pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to develop independent learning skills. While tasks and activities matched the needs of the majority of pupils, higher-attaining pupils were not always consistently challenged. A few pupils with additional support needs made appropriate progress, learning science within the support for learning provision.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning was good. The quality of meeting pupils' needs and attainment was adequate.

- At S1/S2, most pupils were making appropriate progress in science and had good opportunities to develop their investigative skills.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils attaining Credit awards was consistently below the national average. Almost all pupils presented for Access 2 science and Access 3 chemistry had been successful.
- At S5/S6, attainment at Higher was in line with the national average. Almost all pupils presented for Advanced Higher had been successful.

History

Teachers introduced and explained tasks well. They used an appropriate range of teaching approaches and helped pupils understand how to make progress. Homework was generally used well to consolidate pupils' learning. Pupils were well behaved and most were enthusiastic about their learning. Programmes and activities were popular but did not always meet the broad range of needs, particularly those of the most able pupils.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good. Pupils' attainment and meeting needs were adequate. The school had tried to manage a difficult situation but staff absence had led to a lack of continuity in learning which in turn affected attainment in 2007. Particular features of attainment included the following.

- At S1/S2, most pupils were making adequate progress in their coursework. Most pupils had difficulty remembering what they had learnt previously and needed more opportunities to develop their skills in analysis, discussion and debate.
- At S3/S4, the proportion of pupils attaining Credit and General awards at Standard Grade was in line with the national average and improving.
- At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils attaining A-C grades at Higher was well below the national average. All of the small number of pupils presented recently for Advanced Higher had attained A-C awards.

Attainment

Information about the subjects inspected has been given earlier in the report. Across the school, particular features of pupils' progress, results in examinations and other qualifications, including those awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)³ for the three year period 2005-2007, are included below.

By the end of S2, attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- The majority of pupils attained appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading, and writing. In mathematics, the majority of S2 pupils attained appropriate national levels but the proportion was decreasing. The school collated pupils' levels of attainment in other subjects but did not use them effectively to evaluate their overall progress in learning.

By the end of S4 attainment was weak. Particular features included the following.

- The proportions of pupils gaining five or more SCQF awards at levels 3 and 5 were in line with national averages and much lower than in similar schools.
- The proportion of pupils gaining five or more SCQF awards at level 4 was above the national average and in line with that of similar schools.
- At Standard Grade, pupils performed better in administration than in their other subjects. Pupils performed notably poorer in computing.
- The proportions of pupils gaining Credit awards in administration, craft & design and graphic communication were well above the national averages. The proportion of pupils gaining Credit awards in physics was well below the national average.

By the end of S5/S6 attainment was adequate. Particular features included the following.

- By the end of S5, the proportions of pupils attaining one or more, or three or more awards at SCQF level 6 were above national averages, but notably lower than in similar schools. The proportion gaining five or more awards at level 6 was also notably lower than in similar schools but was in line with the national average, and improving.
- By the end of S6, pupils' performance at Higher was above national averages but below that of similar schools. At Advanced Higher, the proportion of pupils attaining one or more awards was above the national average but below that of similar schools.

³ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

- The proportions of pupils attaining A-C grades at Higher in French, graphic communication, mathematics, music and PE were well above national averages. The proportion was well below the national average in modern studies.

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>The school placed a high priority on ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. All staff had been trained in child protection procedures. Policies were in place for safe use of the Internet, anti-bullying, racism and health promotion but did not give sufficiently detailed advice to staff. A whole-school approach to health promotion was being driven by the Health Promoting Schools working group. It organised regular promotion of a range of health issues across the school, including healthy eating and mental health. School lunches were of good quality and were well presented. Pupil support was well organised through a house system. Work with partner agencies ensured a range of support strategies was available for pupils and parents. Guidance staff had a good knowledge of pupils through planned interviews and contact through personal and social education. Senior pupils, who acted as buddies, supported the pastoral and learning needs of younger pupils.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>Accommodation was good. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building was safe, very clean and well maintained. It provided a stimulating learning environment. • The building was accessible to all users. • Pupils had insufficient social areas for break times, particularly during adverse weather. • The recently refurbished dining room was popular with pupils but the school needed to re-examine the management of the space to cater for the large number wanting to use the service.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Parents, pupils, staff and the community were proud of the school and its achievements. The school had a positive working atmosphere and the morale of staff and pupils was high. Staff's expectations of what pupils could achieve, particularly in examinations, were not high enough. Pupils were very well behaved, extremely polite and worked enthusiastically with staff. Teachers used a range of strategies to encourage pupils to achieve. The recently developed positive referral log effectively celebrated pupils' successes in S1 and S2. All staff and pupils were treated fairly and included in all aspects of the life of the school. Assemblies were not organised effectively and the school did not provide sufficient opportunities for religious observance. Aspects of the curriculum developed pupils' understanding of racial equality and cultural diversity. This was not yet monitored and promoted systematically enough.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The quality of partnership with parents and the community was good. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Parent Council was keen to become more involved in the work of the school. • Parents supported activities beyond the school day, for example by coaching sports teams. • The school made effective use of its links with local businesses to provide work experience for pupils. • New and innovative transition arrangements for pupils starting in S1 were effective and very well planned. • Parents were not consulted enough on the school's improvement plan, the curriculum or their right to withdraw pupils from sensitive health issues.

5. Leading and improving the school

Milne's High School lacked clear leadership and a vision to which pupils, parents and staff could relate. Although many pupils achieved well, the school was not sufficiently focused on raising achievement for all pupils. The quality of teaching and learning was good. The weak curriculum and lack of consistency in providing pupils with challenging learning activities meant that the school was not meeting the needs of all its pupils. Pupils were very polite and well behaved. However, their expectations and those of staff were not high enough. While arrangements for pupils' care and welfare were very good the arrangements to monitor pupils' progress across the school were not sufficiently developed.

Overall, leadership had important weaknesses. The headteacher and three depute headteachers worked hard but lack of teamwork limited their collective effectiveness and their overall impact on the school. Their responsibilities were not sufficiently strategic and did not focus strongly enough on improving the quality of learning and teaching and levels of pupil attainment. Nevertheless, they had contributed strongly to the development of the school's positive and inclusive ethos. Most principal teachers provided effective leadership for their departments but a lack of strategic direction and systematic monitoring contributed to some important variations in practice. A number of staff working groups provided opportunities for teaching and other staff to develop leadership experience and skills. A lack of clear remits and sense of direction for the groups limited their impact.

The school's arrangements for quality assurance and improvement had important weaknesses. The school did not review its work and performance systematically and consistently. Arrangements did not focus effectively on improving the quality of learning and teaching, and raising levels of achievement and attainment. Staff's understanding of the purposes of self-evaluation and commitment to its use were too variable. The impact of the staff working group on self-evaluation was limited. Staff reviewed examination data at whole-school and departmental levels but did not always use it to guide future action and improvement. Links between senior managers and subject departments were not sufficiently consistent or focused on improvement at classroom level. An innovative scheme that paired a small number of teachers to observe and develop their classroom practice had not yet had significant impact. Arrangements for classroom observation lacked rigour and consistency. Whole-school and departmental planning were not effectively coordinated and monitored. Staff were committed to the school and the pupils and keen to extend teamworking and improve the school. The school required continued and enhanced support from the education authority to increase its capacity to improve.

As well as building on the strengths and addressing the issues raised throughout this report, the school and the education authority should address the following main points for action.

Main points for action

- Improve the curriculum.
- Promote a culture of high expectations amongst staff and pupils.
- Increase opportunities for religious observance.
- Develop self-evaluation and ensure that it results in improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and attainment.
- Improve the strategic and corporate leadership 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 and carers. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in a report to parents and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

David Gregory
HM Inspector

15 January 2008

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The following quality indicators have been used in the inspection process to contribute to the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school in promoting learning and achievement for all pupils.

Section 3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	
Structure of the curriculum	weak
The teaching process	good
Meeting pupils' needs	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	good
Personal and social development	very good
Overall quality of attainment: S1/S2	adequate
Overall quality of attainment: S3/S4	weak
Overall quality of attainment: S5/S6	adequate

Section 4. How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	good
Climate and relationships	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	weak
Equality and fairness	good
Partnership with parents, the Parent Council and the community	good

Section 5. Leading and improving the school	
Leadership across the school	weak
Self-evaluation	weak

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

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

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

The following provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered in the inspection and comments are included as appropriate throughout the report.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<p>Around a half of parents responded to the questionnaire. They were very positive about most aspects of the work of the school. In particular they thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school had a good reputation and staff were welcoming; • the school was well maintained; • their children were treated fairly and staff showed care and concern for all pupils; and • school reports and parents' evenings were useful and informative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a third of parents thought the school had not explained how they could support their children with homework. • Just over a half of parents had a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<p>The majority of pupils responded to the questionnaire. They were positive about most aspects of the school, and felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers knew them well and the school helped them to be safe and healthy; and • teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability and helped them when they were having difficulties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just over a half thought pupils had a say in improving the school.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were caring towards pupils and provided constructive feedback on their work; • Almost all staff enjoyed working in the school and thought time for continuous professional development was used well; and • teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around two thirds of staff thought senior managers did not operate effectively as a team. • Around a third of staff thought communication amongst staff could be better.

Appendix 3 Attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S4

		2005	2006	2007 ⁴
<i>English and Mathematics</i> <i>@ Level 3</i>	Milne's High School	93	94	92
	Comparator schools ⁵	96	96	96
	National	90	91	91
<i>5+ @ Level 3 or better</i>	Milne's High School	94	92	92
	Comparator schools	96	95	95
	National	90	91	91
<i>5+ @ Level 4 or better</i>	Milne's High School	86	84	83
	Comparator schools	88	88	87
	National	76	77	75
<i>5+ @ Level 5 or better</i>	Milne's High School	28	41	33
	Comparator schools	43	46	45
	National	34	35	32

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S5

		2005	2006	2007 ⁴
<i>5+ @ Level 4 or better</i>	Milne's High School	88	86	83
	Comparator schools ⁵	89	90	89
	National	78	78	79
<i>5+ @ Level 5 or better</i>	Milne's High School	48	41	51
	Comparator schools	59	56	56
	National	45	45	46
<i>1+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	Milne's High School	50	36	48
	Comparator schools	50	47	48
	National	39	38	38
<i>3+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	Milne's High School	27	18	27
	Comparator schools	34	30	31
	National	23	22	22
<i>5+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	Milne's High School	7	8	10
	Comparator schools	16	14	14
	National	10	10	9

Percentage of relevant S4 roll attaining by end of S6

		2005	2006	2007⁴
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Milne's High School	58	51	42
	Comparator schools⁵	61	61	58
	National	47	48	47
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Milne's High School	60	51	38
	Comparator schools	54	53	50
	National	43	43	42
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Milne's High School	42	35	26
	Comparator schools	41	42	39
	National	30	30	29
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Milne's High School	26	22	15
	Comparator schools	27	29	28
	National	19	20	19
1+ @ Level 7 or better	Milne's High School	16	14	16
	Comparator schools	16	19	19
	National	12	13	12

⁴ Pre Appeal

⁵ Comparator schools are the 20 schools statistically closest to the school being inspected in terms of the key characteristics of the school population.

How can you contact us?

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