

**Cluny Primary School
Buckie
The Moray Council
11 November 2008**

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1. Background

Cluny Primary School was inspected in June 2008 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, 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 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, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the west of the town of Buckie. At the time of the inspection the roll was 341. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- Pupils' wider achievements.
- Well-motivated pupils who engaged positively in their learning.
- High quality of care and welfare for all pupils provided by staff.
- Pupils' understanding of equality and citizenship issues.

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.

Overall, parents, staff and pupils were very happy with the school. All parents stated that the school encouraged their children to work to the best of their ability. All felt that their children enjoyed being at school and that staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. All pupils said that teachers explained things clearly,

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

expected them to work to the best of their ability and helped them when they were having difficulties. All pupils stated that they felt safe and well looked after. Staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. They felt that pupils were enthusiastic about learning and that the school was well led. A few teachers and around half of support staff felt that communication amongst staff could be better.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

Pupils experienced a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers made appropriate use of additional time allocated to English language and mathematics in order to improve pupils' attainment. The school was making steady progress towards providing two hours of good quality physical education for all pupils each week. Pupils at P6 and P7 were developing appropriate skills in speaking and listening in French and German. Staff had made a positive start at developing active play at P1 and P2 to provide additional stimulus for learning. Pupils were developing their information and communications technology (ICT) skills well in several areas of the curriculum, including environmental studies. The quality of teaching was good overall. All teachers used a variety of effective teaching approaches to provide a positive and stimulating learning environment. They gave helpful instructions, clear explanations, and used questioning skilfully to reinforce main points and to check pupils' understanding. Staff used praise effectively to motivate pupils to participate in lessons and to celebrate success. In most lessons, pupils had effective opportunities to explore their thinking and provide extended answers to teachers' questions. Regular homework reinforced class work appropriately. Teachers at the upper stages had developed appropriate homework activities which involved parents well in supporting their children's learning.

The quality of learners' experiences was good overall. Most pupils listened attentively, were well behaved and carried out written and practical tasks enthusiastically. Pupils understood the purposes of lessons and what they were expected to do. They behaved responsibly and contributed confidently in lessons. At all stages, pupils worked effectively in groups and individually, and led some aspects of learning. In most lessons, pupils took responsibility for their own learning and often helped each other, for example in project work and presentations. Overall, the pace of learning was brisk, but at times pupils were given insufficient time to reflect on ideas. There was scope for all pupils to be given more challenging tasks.

Improvements in performance

The school had achieved good improvements in its performance, across a number of important areas. Staff had successfully improved their approaches to the teaching and learning of mathematics and writing. They had developed a better balance between imaginative and factual writing.

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Across the stages, most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in key aspects of English language. Most pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Standards of attainment had remained steady over recent years. Most pupils, including those who required additional support with their learning, were making good progress. Pupils listened well in lessons and expressed and justified their views clearly to peers in group tasks. Most pupils enjoyed reading for pleasure and could explain their choice of literature. A few reluctant readers across the stages, and ambitious readers at the upper stages, needed further guidance to broaden the range of books they read. Most pupils demonstrated appropriate understanding of the use of language and the skills of the writer. A few pupils were developing critical reading skills by editing one another's writing. Pupils at P7 demonstrated a good range of effective reading skills such as scanning texts for relevant information. In almost all classes, pupils wrote competently for a range of purposes. Their skills in writing poetry which captured the atmosphere of the subject were particularly well developed. Higher-attaining pupils at the upper stages needed more challenging writing opportunities. A few pupils who experienced difficulties with spelling did not write confidently. Pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work was of a high standard. Staff had begun to develop pupils' skills well in talking and listening in a range of other curriculum areas.

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Across the school, most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels. Standards of attainment had remained steady over recent years. Almost all pupils at P2 and most at P5 attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected. The early progress was not always maintained by all pupils at P3 and P4. Those pupils who had not yet attained national levels were making suitable progress. Across the school, pupils used ICT and mathematical games well to support their learning. At all stages, most pupils had a good knowledge of handling data and answered related questions well. Across the stages, most pupils carried out written and mental calculations effectively and were able to explain how they reached the answer. Pupils at P1 and P2 were progressing well in developing their skills in addition and subtraction. Most at the upper stages could work accurately with fractions and percentages and were confident in aspects of measurement. Pupils had a good understanding of shape relevant to their stage. Those at P3 were confident in using coordinates and producing graphs. Across the stages, most pupils worked enthusiastically when problem solving in small groups and used successfully a range of different strategies.

The school helped pupils to develop their learning skills across other areas of the curriculum. Pupils used their practical and research skills effectively when working together on projects, and when reporting their findings to parents. Across the stages, pupils were using their mathematical skills well in other curricular areas such as science and health. Pupils at P2 talked confidently about farming in Africa. Those at P3 knew about the different kinds of fuels and their uses. At P4, pupils had successfully built well-designed model gliders as part of their project work on flight. Pupils at P7 understood the effects of being in the media and the public eye and its impact on people's lifestyles.

The school took very effective steps to develop pupils' wider achievements. At all stages, pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles was raised through a number of exciting activities such as 'Wake Up-Shake Up'. Most pupils were involved in a variety of out-of-school activities such as athletics and team sports. Pupils took on roles of

responsibility, for example, those at P7 carried out their playground duties well. At P6, pupils successfully supported those in P1 when they started school. Participation in these activities raised pupils' self-esteem and helped them to become more confident in working with others. Across the school, pupils developed good citizenship skills in their roles as members of the pupil council and through involvement in several activities. For example, a group of P7 pupils travelled to London to accept an award from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution on behalf of the school. Pupils had successfully participated in a beach clearing project as part of the Moray Firth Partnership - Beach Guardians Project and had organised an eco-conference for the local community. These and similar activities had helped the school gain a silver Eco-Schools Scotland award and raised pupils' awareness of the global importance of environmental issues.

The school had made good progress in addressing the priorities in its improvement plan. Several developments of the school improvement plan were beginning to make an impact on the learning and teaching in the school. The school was currently reviewing its programmes in science and ICT. Teachers' implementation of new approaches to learning and teaching was helping to improve attainment. The school knew its strengths and development needs and was committed to improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs were good. Staff knew their pupils well and planned lessons to address their needs. Teachers provided activities which often related to pupils' interests and built well on pupils' prior learning. Overall, in most classes, teachers' planning took appropriate account of pupils' prior learning. Teachers often organised pupils into groups for specific tasks, sometimes arranging for the groups to comprise of pupils with similar attainment. At other times, teachers formed groups which led to effective learning with older pupils gaining confidence from helping younger pupils. Support staff made an important contribution by working with groups and alongside individual pupils to ensure that most made appropriate progress in their learning. At times, higher-attaining learners were not given sufficiently challenging tasks. At the early stages, a few pupils with specific learning needs received additional support for learning from a visiting teacher. Others received help in connection with English language. All the pupils concerned had benefited from this support and were making progress towards agreed learning targets. Due to staffing difficulties, some external agencies were not always successful in meeting the needs of a few very vulnerable pupils.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school's arrangements for pupils' care and welfare were very good. Pupils felt safe and secure in the school and were confident that they could discuss concerns with staff. Staff were attentive to the physical, emotional and social needs of pupils. The school had appropriate arrangements for dealing with child protection issues which were implemented and well understood by almost all staff. There were appropriate procedures in place for the safe administration of medicine. Staff dealt promptly and effectively with any incidents arising from disagreements between pupils. Pupils were well informed about hygiene, nutrition, drugs and personal relationships. The school put a strong emphasis on healthy eating. Pupils ran healthy fitness dance sessions and there was access to fruit and salads at school lunches. They also had regular experience of a range of exercise activities, some supported well by the visitors and visiting specialists. Staff made appropriate arrangements for the transfer of children from a neighbouring nursery class into P1. They collaborated well with staff from Buckie High School for the induction of P7 pupils into S1.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The overall management and use of resources and space for learning was good. The school building was well maintained. Staff had created a bright and stimulating learning environment with effective displays, including pupils' work. Pupils' learning was well supported by a good range and quality of resources, although ICT provision needed to be updated. Staff used the playgrounds successfully for teaching various aspects of the curriculum. Appropriate security arrangements were in place. The lower floor provided appropriate access for users with restricted mobility.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	The school's supportive climate and positive relationships promoted effective learning and personal development. All staff ensured a welcoming and helpful reception for parents and visitors. They worked effectively as a team and were mutually supportive and motivating. Pupils were courteous and polite, and were willing to help others. Staff had high expectations for pupils' behaviour, attitude and attendance. Occasionally, their expectations of what pupils could achieve were not high enough. Staff encouraged and rewarded pupils' achievements in a variety of ways. Pupils' achievements were celebrated in classes, at assemblies and in the local newspaper. The school promoted diversity of religions and cultures through its religious and moral education programme and provided regular opportunities for religious observance. Staff and pupils were well aware of the issues related to race, citizenship and other equalities through cross-curricular work and specific projects.
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school had developed very good links with parents and the local community. It had effective links with the Parent Council, PTA, local schools and external agencies and played a very successful part in community events. Staff had organised practical workshops and meetings for parents in relation to health promotion activities. Parent helpers successfully supported learning and teaching through their participation in school events. The school communicated very successfully with parents through informative newsletters, well-attended parents' evenings and helpful progress reports for their children. The headteacher had consulted parents effectively on sensitive health education issues.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Cluny Primary School had successfully developed a community ethos and provided its pupils with a very caring and supportive learning environment. The school's overall performance was good and staff had made a good start at making improvements to the curriculum. Staff promoted and celebrated pupils' wider achievements very effectively. The quality of learning and teaching was good. Staff did not always ensure that pupils were consistently set appropriately challenging tasks to meet their needs effectively.

The experienced and dedicated headteacher was committed to improving the quality of teaching and learners' experiences. He had managed change sensitively by consulting staff about improvements to the curriculum and teaching approaches. The headteacher

had used his good interpersonal skills to develop and maintain positive relationships with parents and the wider community. He had supported staff appropriately in improving their approaches to teaching and in the development of curricular materials. The headteacher needed to increase the pace of improvements in learning and teaching. The deputy headteacher carried out her responsibilities very effectively to support the headteacher and staff. The principal teachers carried out their remits well but did not yet have a strong enough role in leading whole-school developments. Staff worked well together as a team but were not sufficiently involved in leading learning, and in developing whole-school initiatives. The school's approaches to self-evaluation were satisfactory. Senior managers used attainment data appropriately to track pupils' progress and to inform discussions with teachers in planning groups and setting learning targets. They monitored teachers' forward plans regularly, observed the classroom practice of the majority of teachers and provided helpful feedback. The headteacher had sought parents' views, for example relating to the format of parents' evenings and had introduced improvements. Teachers had started to share ideas and practices with each other. The headteacher had not yet ensured that approaches to self-evaluation were sufficiently rigorous and consistent across all stages, and that good practice was shared effectively. With continuing support from the education authority, the school had a good capacity for further improvement.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- provide staff with better opportunities to be fully involved in leading and developing whole-school developments;
- provide all pupils with appropriate challenge in their learning; and
- further develop self-evaluation to share good practice in learning and teaching and raise attainment.

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.

Hakim Din
HM Inspector

11 November 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.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	good
Improvements in performance	good

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

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

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	satisfactory
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents were very positive about almost all aspects of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were no significant issues.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils were very positive about almost all aspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few thought that the behaviour of other pupils was not good.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff were positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few teachers felt that communication between senior managers and staff could be better.• Around a half of support staff thought that communication amongst staff could be better.

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 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, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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