

**St Peter's RC Primary School
and Nursery Class
Buckie
The Moray Council
7 October 2008**

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1. Background

St Peter's RC Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in May 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined the quality of the children's experience in the nursery, pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council, and a group of 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 is located in the Buckpool area of Buckie. St Peter's is a denominational school and is zoned to serve the Catholic population covered by the parish of St Peter's Church. This stretches from Cullen in the east to Spey Bay in the west. At the time of the inspection the roll was 105, including 80 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

St Peter's RC Primary School had recently undergone significant staff changes. All of the current teaching staff had taken up post within the past year. The headteacher had taken up post in January 2008. Prior to this, the education authority had put in place acting headteacher arrangements over the past year as a result of the previous headteacher's absence from school.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Approaches used by staff to improve the quality of learners' experiences.
- Pupils' wider achievements.
- Support for pupils who needed extra help with their learning.
- Nursery children's progress in their learning and development.
- The headteacher's drive to improve school practice.

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 all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents, pupils and staff were positive about school practice. Parents felt welcomed in the school and were pleased with most aspects. They thought that the headteacher led the school well. They liked that any concerns were dealt with promptly. A few parents expressed concerns about the impact of high staff turnover in recent years on their children's learning. A few nursery parents wanted better communication and more regular information on their children's progress. A few parents of both nursery children and primary pupils wanted their children to be more challenged in their learning. Pupils enjoyed school and were very positive about staff. They felt well looked after in school. A few pupils at the upper stages wanted a broader range of books to read. Across the school, pupils had no concerns about bullying and felt that the behaviour of pupils was good. Staff enjoyed working in the school. They felt they worked together well as a team to improve pupils' learning. They were very positive about the leadership of the headteacher and the support they received from parents.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

In the nursery class, staff provided children with a good curriculum which was based firmly on play and active learning. Staff were involving children well in planning their learning. Staff provided a broad range of experiences which, overall, were successfully developing children's skills across key aspects of their learning. However, nursery children had insufficient opportunities to be creative using musical instruments and dressing up equipment. In most cases, staff interacted well with children to extend their thinking and further their learning. At the primary stages, the quality of the curriculum was satisfactory. Teachers were providing a breadth and balance of experiences for pupils. At the early stages, pupils were active and learning well through relevant and meaningful contexts, including play experiences. Throughout the school, teachers were developing pupils' skills well in citizenship, personal and social development and health education in different contexts. As a result, pupils were developing confidence and taking responsibility. Pupils were learning about religious and moral education through the well-planned programme which included links with both St Peter's RC Church and a local church of another Christian denomination. In taking forward the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*, staff consulted pupils appropriately on what should be included. The school provided all pupils with two hours of good quality physical education each week, in line with national recommendations. Pupils also took part in other opportunities for activity in a variety of sports. Pupils at P4 to P7 had appropriate opportunities to study French. The school was making some progress in developing its arrangements for teaching science, enterprise education and information and communications technology (ICT). Staff were addressing correctly the need to introduce programmes for teaching sex education. Improved arrangements for teaching mathematics and English language were resulting in improved pupils' attainment. The school was achieving success in closing the gap between those who were attaining well and those who were not. Visitors and visiting specialists, including the Active Schools Coordinator, enhanced pupils' learning. Staff used materials

and resources effectively to motivate pupils. Across the school, the quality of teaching was good. Staff used praise effectively to motivate and encourage pupils. In most lessons, teachers used a varied range of teaching approaches. Together with other support staff, they engaged very well with groups of pupils and individuals to further their learning. Staff shared learning intentions and worked hard to ensure that pupils understood the purpose of lessons. Visiting staff did not always share learning intentions. Overall, teachers questioned pupils effectively to extend their learning. Teachers were making increased use of ICT effectively to support pupils' learning.

Across the school, the quality of learning was good. Learners were treated with fairness and respect. Nursery children's experiences were good. Most responded well to play experiences offered and were motivated. Children were enthusiastic, cooperated well with each other and worked independently with little supervision. They did not always have sufficient opportunities to take on responsibilities. A few children lacked confidence to engage in the range of activities on offer. In the primary classes, pupils felt that staff sought and valued their views and opinions on learning. Most pupils were motivated, keen to learn and took responsibility for their own learning. They also collaborated well with others. The majority worked appropriately without close supervision in small groups. A few did not always focus on their learning and at times distracted others. Most were independent and reflected confidently on their own learning. They provided feedback to other pupils on their strengths and areas of improvement. Across the school, most pupils knew what they needed to do to improve the quality of their work. At P5 to P7, pupils worked appropriately with staff to identify targets for their learning. Pupils participated enthusiastically in health activities and knew the effect of different lifestyles. They were developing good skills in ICT and using these to enhance their learning. Pupils had good opportunities to work with those at other stages. Nursery children interacted well with pupils in P1 and P2.

Improvements in performance

Standards of attainment in the school were satisfactory. In the past year, primary aged pupils were making good progress from their prior levels of attainment. Those pupils who were not achieving expected standards were making steady progress. Nursery children were making good progress in their development and learning. Across the school, nursery children and primary pupils were developing confidence and achieving success.

Children in the nursery class were making good progress in communication and language. Almost all listened well to instructions and stories. A few were developing reading skills through using the book corner independently. Most children spoke confidently to adults and each other. Most were developing early writing skills. Older children wrote their own name and were developing a good knowledge of letter names and sounds.

At the primary stages, the overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was satisfactory. The majority achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing. A few attained these earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress. At P1 and P2, pupils were developing effective skills in literacy. The school had not yet developed systems to assess pupils' skills in listening and talking. Most pupils listened attentively to each other and to adults. A few did not always listen well to adults or other pupils. A few others were not always confident in putting forward views and opinions. By P7, pupils showed good skills in reading. They read very well and used expression to make their

reading interesting. They talked confidently about books they had read and expressed opinions on likes and dislikes. They showed good skills in understanding texts. Older pupils enjoyed reading to younger pupils through the school's paired reading programme. Pupils at the early stages were developing effective skills in reading and writing and applying these across the curriculum. At P2, pupils wrote simple sentences and stories independently. By P7, pupils wrote at length and for a variety of purposes across various curricular areas. Overall, most pupils' work was neat and well presented.

Nursery children's progress in mathematics was satisfactory. They were developing their skills and understanding of early number. Older children recognised numbers to ten and a few children made good use of the computer to develop their numeracy skills. Children sorted appropriately and matched a range of objects. Staff did not extend children's learning in mathematics sufficiently well. Children were not applying mathematical language across a range of play and social activities.

At the primary stages, the overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was satisfactory. The majority of pupils now achieved appropriate national levels in key aspects of mathematics. A few attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Those not attaining these levels were making good progress. At P1 and P2, pupils were developing their skills in numeracy. Across the school, pupils were developing good skills in information handling and by P7, most handled information effectively and interpreted accurately a range of graphs. Pupils applied these skills well when surveying pupils as part of their coursework in health education. At a few stages, pupils' skills in mental calculation were less well developed than in other aspects of mathematics. Younger pupils were developing a good knowledge of time and used appropriate mathematical language. At P2, pupils were becoming more familiar with numbers up to 1000. Older pupils had a good understanding of volume and measurement. At all stages, pupils had a good understanding of shape, position and movement. They were developing their skills in solving mathematical problems. Pupils at the upper stages could not always use different methods to solve problems.

Nursery children's progress in emotional, personal and social development was good. They cooperated well with one another, shared and took turns. Children were becoming confident at expressing themselves to one another and to adults. Their progress in knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Children had good knowledge and understanding of life cycles through investigating wildlife and seasons. Their progress in physical development and movement was good. Their creative skills were not well enough developed in music and other aspects of their expressive and creative development.

At the primary stages, pupils were making good progress in physical education. Throughout the school, pupils were learning about keeping safe and understood the importance of healthy lifestyles. They were developing appropriate skills to keep themselves fit and healthy. They were making steady progress in acquiring ICT skills. Pupils had a good knowledge of religious and moral education. Their progress in personal and social education was very good. Staff had recognised appropriately the need to develop further pupils' skills in science and aspects of environmental studies.

The school took very good steps to develop pupils' wider achievements. Nursery children were confident and enthusiastic. Most were developing friendships and showed independence when undertaking personal tasks. They cared for their environment and

helped tidy their local area. Staff had not yet developed sufficient opportunities for nursery children to develop their wider achievements and take on more responsibility. Pupils contributed well to decision making through their involvement in groups such as the pupil council, Eco Committee, the School Health Group and Junior Road Safety Group. Pupils were developing a sound awareness of environmental education issues through the Eco-Schools Scotland project, in which they had achieved a bronze award. The pupil council took effective action to instigate the formation of a school cross-country club based at Buckie High School. Pupils contributed appropriately to school life and the wider community, raising their awareness of citizenship. They helped improve the playground and had switched on Buckie Christmas lights. Pupils had an awareness of others' needs through their involvement in buddy schemes to support younger pupils through various initiatives and fundraising. The school had very strong links with St Peter's RC Church, with pupils participating well in its activities and celebrations. Pupils successfully took part in a good range of sporting competitions. At P4, pupils had made a very interesting and well-directed animated film. These pupils presented their production very well to the whole school. The school recognised pupils' achievements outwith school and highlighted these on displays within the school for others to see. Commendably, one class had won a national online Science competition. Several pupils at P1 had been successful in winning a national poetry competition and had their work published. All of these achievements were helping pupils to develop confidence, take responsibility, tackle new situations and engage appropriately with visitors. Nursery children were not yet involved enough in whole-school achievements.

Previous development plans had not given appropriate attention to improving pupils' performance in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. In her short time in post, the headteacher had quickly taken appropriate action and already there were positive signs of improving performance. Priorities in the nursery improvement plan had resulted in an improved environment for learning. The school was now working towards ensuring that nursery priorities focused more on outcomes for learners and linked more with the overall school improvement plan.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's approaches to meeting learners' needs were good. Overall, nursery staff met children's needs well through a stimulating range of activities. Higher achieving children were not always challenged. At times, children's opportunities to explore and investigate their interests were limited. Across the primary stages, most pupils worked well on appropriate tasks well matched to their needs. At P1 to P4, pupils engaged well in practical activities. Pupils not achieving expected levels of attainment were given extra help. As a result, they were making good and, at times, very good progress. Higher attaining learners had not always made appropriate progress. In a few instances, large group sessions for nursery children and whole class lessons for primary pupils did not always enable them to make appropriate progress. Pupils for whom English was an additional language were making good progress. Support for learning staff worked very well alongside teachers in classes to help groups and individuals achieve their potential. The school had established some helpful links with different agencies and engaged well with these to help pupils. Primary pupils were making very good progress in working towards achieving and, at times, overtaking learning targets in their individualised educational programmes. Learning support staff did not yet provide enough guidance to nursery staff about supporting children who needed extra help. Staffing constraints in the Council's

educational psychological services had led to delays in assessing, identifying and supporting learners' needs.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>The school had good arrangements for ensuring the care and welfare of nursery children and primary pupils. The school was developing a range of appropriate policies which staff were currently embedding successfully into practice. Pupils were developing appropriate citizenship skills. They cared for and helped each other, for example with reading. All staff knew about child protection arrangements and what to do if they had concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff promoted healthy lifestyles. They encouraged pupils to respect others and to take their responsibilities seriously. The school carried out appropriate checks on pupils not at school without explanation. Appropriately, staff were continuing to explore approaches to improving pupils' attendance. An appropriate policy was in place to promote safe use of the Internet and mobile phones. Appropriate arrangements were in place to support children enrolling in the nursery class, moving to P1 and for pupils at P7 transferring to Buckie High School. The school had identified correctly the need to review arrangements at the school entrance for nursery children arriving and being collected to ensure their safety at all times.</p>
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The school's management of resources and space for learning was good. With staff, the headteacher had created a well organised and stimulating environment for nursery children's and primary pupils' learning. Overall, security arrangements were appropriate. It was sometimes possible for young children to leave and access the building too quickly as they ran ahead of parents and carers. Access to parts of the school were difficult for users with restricted mobility. An attractive outdoor area enhanced learning. Staff made effective use of all available spaces for learning. Staff and pupils had suitable access to resources to support learning and teaching across most curricular areas. The nursery did not have a broad enough range of books for children and staff to access. Staff were making increased use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. Within the school, storage was limited. The staffroom was too small and cloakroom facilities for both staff and pupils were very limited.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>The motivated staff had high expectations of learners' performance and behaviour. Staff and pupils identified strongly with the school. Teamwork was good. Staff worked well together to provide an improving quality of education for pupils. Their expectations and approaches to promoting pupils' achievements were good. Staff had high expectations for pupils' attainment and were working hard with pupils to raise their own expectations. Pupils took pride in their achievements and displays of their best work. The school's approach to equality and fairness was good. Staff were effectively developing pupils' awareness of inclusion, citizenship and social responsibility. They used coursework and class discussions well to raise pupils' awareness of equality issues. Learners were developing a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. Staff used assemblies appropriately to provide regular opportunities for pupils to take part in religious observance and worship together and to celebrate pupils' achievements and successes. The school recognised the need to develop more actively within the curriculum pupils' awareness of citizenship across the world. Nursery staff did not yet promote and celebrate diversity sufficiently through the curriculum.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>The school's partnerships with parents and the local community were good. Parents were being encouraged appropriately to become involved in their children's learning through newsletters, curricular activities and reports. The headteacher was improving communication with parents through informal and formal events. Parents were welcomed as partners in their children's education. A class teacher had developed a helpful booklet to support the parents of nursery children in the transition to P1. The active Parent Council was very supportive of the school. A member of staff was influential on the School Health Group. The group was already having an impact on pupils' awareness of making positive choices. Staff had not yet consulted appropriately with parents about sensitive health issues. Parents valued opportunities to discuss their children's progress. Nursery parents wanted more information on nursery practice. The school had recently sampled parents' views appropriately. Parents were positive about school and their children's experiences. They assisted well with fundraising and in helping to support pupils with sports activities and outings.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

The headteacher and staff were good at providing pupils with a caring, inclusive and supportive, learning environment. Learners were happy, motivated and well behaved. They accessed activities which successfully promoted their personal and social development. The quality of teaching was good and nursery children and primary pupils had positive learning experiences. Nursery children's progress was good. Primary pupils' performance was satisfactory and improving. Staff needed to further improve pupils' skills in talking and in mental calculation. At the primary stages, pupils were taking responsibility for their own learning. The pace of learning was not always brisk enough for higher attaining pupils. Learners with additional needs were well supported. All staff were committed to working under the leadership of the headteacher to provide an improving high quality experience for nursery children and primary aged pupils.

Over the past three years, there had been significant changes to leadership within the school. This had sometimes had a negative impact on staff morale. With staff, the new headteacher had quickly focused appropriately on learning, teaching and the quality of pupils' experiences. She had effectively established a positive climate for improving learning and was providing good leadership. She was highly committed to the school and its community. She had gained the respect of all staff, parents and pupils. In her six months in post, she had improved many aspects of the school. Her leadership of change and improvement was good. Teaching staff were taking an active role in developing aspects of the curriculum and taking account of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. The headteacher was encouraging opportunities for leadership at all levels. Responsibilities were being shared well amongst staff. Arrangements for improving the school through self-evaluation were satisfactory and improving. The headteacher had quickly established and implemented helpful procedures to monitor school practice. She reviewed teachers' plans, sampled pupils' work and monitored classroom practices to bring about improvement in pupils' learning. She sampled appropriately nursery practice, attended and influenced planning meetings and carried out formal monitoring. As a consequence of recent changes to the nursery team, the roles and remits of the nursery teacher and senior nursery nurse had not yet been clearly defined. Across the school, the headteacher was providing good support to staff. Staff supported her well in taking action for improvement. Class teachers were beginning to observe each other's practice appropriately and provide helpful feedback. The school improvement plan was now focused more appropriately on learning and teaching. Staff felt they had appropriate opportunities to contribute to planned improvements. The nursery development plan did not yet focus enough on children's learning. The headteacher needed to continue to involve all staff, including nursery staff, in reviewing practice to improve further all learners' experiences. The school had the capacity for further improvement.

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

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve learning, teaching and nursery children and pupils' performance. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- continue to integrate the nursery into all aspects of school practice and clarify the role of the nursery teacher and senior nursery nurse in leading learning;
- raise pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics; and
- develop the school's approaches to reviewing practice in order to ensure further improvement.

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.

Moirra Cummings
HM Inspector

7 October 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	satisfactory
Teaching for effective learning	good
Children's experiences (nursery class)	good
Learners' experiences (primary stages)	good
Improvements in performance (nursery class)	good
Improvements in performance (primary stages)	satisfactory

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

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	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	good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
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. Where any one group had five or less respondees then, in order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of primary aged pupils were pleased with all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few nursery parents wanted improved communication. • There were no significant concerns at the primary stages.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers knew them well and helped them when they had difficulties with their work. • School made them feel safe and well looked after in school. • Teachers checked their homework. • Teachers told them when how to improve their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were pleased with all aspects of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

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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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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsa.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsa.org.uk.

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