

**Rothiemay Primary School
The Moray Council**

2 September 2003

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Rothiemay Primary School The Moray Council

1. Introduction

Rothiemay Primary School was inspected in April 2003 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 how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, mathematics, and religious and moral education.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents and staff, and a sample of pupils. A member of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA).

2. The school

The school serves the village of Milltown of Rothiemay and the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 66.

Parents' views

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very happy with the work of the school. All who responded thought that:

- the school had a good reputation in the local community and was well led;
- parents' evenings and reports on their child's progress were helpful and informative;
- there was mutual respect between staff and pupils; and
- staff set high standards for pupils' attainment, and made parents feel welcome in the school.

Almost all of those who responded felt that their children enjoyed being at school and found schoolwork stimulating and challenging.

Ethos

The school had a very positive ethos. Relationships between pupils and teachers were very good. Pupils felt secure and happy in the school, and were very well behaved. Staff morale was high. Teamwork between teachers, classroom assistants and ancillary staff was very good. Teachers set high expectations of pupils' attainment and used praise very effectively to encourage pupils to do their best. Information about pupils' achievements was displayed prominently around the school. Regular assemblies provided further opportunities for celebrating success and promoting team spirit, and for religious observance. All staff worked hard and with very good effect to promote a sense of equality and fairness. There was a strong and successful emphasis on promoting tolerance and including everyone in the life of the school. Attendance was in line with national levels.

School and community

The school had established very good links with parents, the local playgroup and other schools, educational support services and the wider community. Notable features included:

- productive curricular links with other primary and secondary schools, and effective arrangements with local secondary schools to ensure the smooth transfer of P7 pupils into S1;
- useful links with other rural schools, for example by hosting sporting events;
- a supportive and active School Board and parent-teacher association, and contributions from a number of parent helpers; and
- effective consultation and communication with the wider parent body through a handbook, newsletters, questionnaires and meetings.

Accommodation

The school's accommodation was very good. There was an effective secure-entry system. The classrooms, hall and library areas were brightly decorated and well furnished to provide a stimulating and comfortable learning environment.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed. Visiting teachers made an effective contribution. Ancillary and auxiliary staff provided a high level of support for teachers and pupils. Provision of resources was very good. The headteacher had used devolved funds and extra monies from parent bodies to build up a wide range of modern teaching and learning materials and improve aspects of the school building. The school had a good stock of computers and audio-visual equipment. Resources were very well organised and used effectively to support and enhance pupils' learning.

3. How well are pupils performing?

- English language** The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Almost all pupils were coping well with their classwork. At all stages pupils listened attentively and responded well. In the early stages teachers used effective strategies to raise attainment. Throughout the school, pupils could read texts appropriate to their stage and offer opinions on what they had read. Pupils' skills in writing for a variety of purposes were improving through, for example, developing a greater awareness of audience. Written work was generally well presented. At all stages almost all pupils were attaining or exceeding appropriate national levels in *listening, talking and reading*. Most pupils were attaining these levels in *writing*.
- Mathematics** The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Almost all pupils were coping well with their classwork. At the P1-P3 stages pupils were making a good start to developing early numeracy skills. By the upper stages pupils could carry out mental and written calculations accurately, although some had difficulties with aspects of decimal calculations. At all stages pupils had a well developed knowledge and understanding of shapes. They were developing good skills in drawing and interpreting graphs, and using computers to handle information. In *problem solving and enquiry* pupils were aware of strategies they could use to solve mathematical problems. Almost all pupils were reaching or exceeding national levels of attainment in *information handling, number, money and measurement, and shape, position and movement*.
- Religious and moral education** Attainment in religious and moral education was good. Pupils were making good progress in learning about *Christianity* and *other world religions*, and were developing their own responses to important questions in *personal search*. While they generally had a very good understanding of topics they were studying, or had

covered recently, their knowledge and understanding of earlier work was at times limited. Pupils at the early stages showed a good understanding of how they could help others. Those at the middle stages had a good grasp of Hinduism, although they needed to revise some of the work they had done on Christianity. Pupils at the upper stages were making good progress in learning about Judaism, although they needed to revise some earlier work on other religions and key aspects of belief in Christianity.

4. How good is the curriculum?

The overall quality of the curriculum was very good. It was monitored closely to ensure suitable breadth and balance at all stages. Programmes of study were well planned, and work in different areas was linked effectively. Pupils in P6 and P7 studied French.

English language

The programme for English language was very good. All key aspects were generally given very good attention. Use of information and communications technology was well developed. Pupils would benefit from greater opportunities to use computers in composing pieces of writing.

Mathematics

The mathematics programme was very good. It gave appropriate attention to all key aspects, including mental and written calculation, and problem solving and enquiry.

Religious and moral education

The programme for religious and moral education was good. It covered all key aspects in an appropriate balance. It did not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to revise and consolidate what they had previously learned.

5. How good is learning and teaching?

The headteacher and her staff worked hard and with much success to ensure that pupils made progress in their learning. Teachers planned their lessons well. The system of planning was being reviewed to clarify further what pupils were to learn and how their progress would be assessed. The quality of teaching was very good. Teachers gave clear explanations and used questioning very effectively to check pupils' understanding and develop their thinking skills. Homework was used well. The pace of pupils' learning was appropriate, and they were suitably challenged. Pupils were attentive and worked purposefully. They had very good opportunities to work co-operatively and independently, and to take responsibility for their learning. Overall, pupils' learning needs were met very effectively. Teachers assessed pupils' progress and attainment well. Assessment in religious and moral education was not fully systematic. Parents received helpful reports on their child's progress and attainment.

6. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare

The school had very good arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils. All staff were aware of, and sensitive to, pupils' needs. Effective policies and procedures were in place for child protection and for dealing with incidents in which pupils' safety might be at risk, including instances of bullying.

Personal and social development

Very good attention was paid to pupils' personal and social development through classroom activities and a range of visits, sporting events and fund-raising for charity. The school successfully placed an emphasis on developing pupils' environmental awareness. Older pupils had opportunities to take responsibility through paired learning activities with younger pupils and a

P6/P7 class council. There was also a pupils' council which included representatives from all classes. The programme for health education paid appropriate attention to aspects of healthy living, including personal relationships and drug education. Parents of pupils in P6/P7 had opportunities to see and discuss materials which dealt with personal relationships.

Support for learning

The quality of support for pupils' learning was good. Teachers and classroom assistants supported pupils well in their classwork. A visiting teacher of learning support gave very good additional support outwith the classroom to pupils who were experiencing difficulties in aspects of their learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. She also provided effective help in these areas to groups of pupils in their classroom activities. This additional support and effective help should be extended where appropriate to further curriculum areas. The visiting teacher had drawn up helpful individualised educational programmes for some pupils. Parents and pupils were not fully involved in the preparation and monitoring of these programmes.

7. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher led the school very well. She was held in high esteem by pupils, parents and staff. During her time in post she had ensured that improved programmes of work were established and that the learning environment was enhanced. She had successfully promoted an ethos of achievement and had improved the school's processes for self-evaluation. Further developments of the school's quality assurance system were planned. The aims of the school were appropriate and a wide range of policies guided its work.

Staff review and development

Arrangements for staff review and development were very good. Staff had attended a range of appropriate training courses which were well linked to priorities in

the school development plan. The work of all staff had been reviewed as part of the education authority's scheme.

Planning for improvement

Planning for improvement was carried out very effectively. Staff, pupils and parents were involved in identifying appropriate priorities for development. These priority projects were set out clearly in a helpful development plan. Planned improvements were implemented effectively and, as a result, programmes of work and pupils' attainment had improved.

Approaches to improving quality

The school had good procedures for quality assurance. The headteacher carefully monitored teachers' plans and visited classes to evaluate the quality of pupils' work. She took account of the views of staff, pupils and parents very effectively. A helpful report on the standards and quality of the school's work had been produced. The headteacher had successfully encouraged teachers to evaluate the quality of their own teaching. She planned to implement in the following session a programme to rigorously monitor the quality of learning and teaching in the school.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

The headteacher and staff in Rothiemay Primary School worked hard and with considerable success to provide a high standard of education for all pupils. Pupils worked well and reached high standards of attainment in many aspects of the curriculum. The school had been successful in implementing improvements and was well placed to develop the quality of its provision even further.

Key strengths

- The overall quality of learning and teaching.
- Attainment of pupils in English language and mathematics.
- The school's ethos, including the behaviour of pupils.
- Links with parents and the wider community.
- The curriculum and the overall quality of programmes of work.
- The commitment of all staff, and the leadership of the headteacher.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- Review the religious and moral education programme to ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to revise and consolidate their work, and develop more systematic assessment procedures in this curriculum area.
- Involve pupils and parents more fully in the production of individualised educational programmes for some pupils.

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very good management of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. 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 the school and the education authority will provide a report to parents and carers on the progress made by the school.

W Douglas Cairns
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division

2 September 2003

See Quality Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Accommodation and facilities
- Staffing
- Provision of resources
- School management of finances
- Structure of the curriculum
- Courses and programmes
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Reporting pupils' progress
- Leadership
- Planning for improvement
- Staff review and development

We judged the following to be *good*

- Teachers' planning
- Assessment as part of teaching
- Learning support
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be *fair*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Quality of lessons observed

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 55% of cases, good in 36% and fair in 9%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

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 web site:

www.hmie.gov.uk

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Bill Maxwell, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Wellgate House (Level 5), Wellgate Centre, Dundee, DD1 2DB. 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.

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