

**Speyside High School  
Aberlour  
The Moray Council**

**2 September 2003**

# Contents

---

1.	Introduction	Page 1
2.	The school	1
3.	How well are pupils performing?	5
4.	How well are the inspected departments performing?	6
5.	How good is the curriculum?	14
6.	How good is learning and teaching?	15
7.	How well are pupils supported?	15
8.	How well is the school managed?	20
9.	How well does the school perform overall?	22-23
	Key strengths	
	Main points for action	
	Appendix	26-27
	Indicators of quality	
	Quality of lessons observed	
	How can you contact us?	28

---

# Inspection of Standards and Quality in Speyside High School, Aberlour The Moray Council

## 1. Introduction

Speyside High School was inspected in April and May 2003 as part of a national sample of secondary education.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. The subjects included in the inspection were English, mathematics, chemistry and S1/S2 science, geography and art and design. HM Inspectors also evaluated the quality of support for pupils, including arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils and child protection, and aspects of guidance and support for learning. In evaluating how well the school and departments were managed, HM Inspectors assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and to samples of staff and pupils. They met the chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

## 2. The school

Speyside High School is a non-denominational secondary school. It serves an extensive rural area, including the villages of Aberlour, Archiestown, Craigellachie, Dufftown, Knockando, Rothes and Tomintoul. At the time of the inspection the roll was 419.

## **Parents' views**

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were generally pleased, or very pleased, with many aspects of the work of the school.

Almost all felt that:

- the school was well led and had a good reputation in the local community;
- staff made them feel welcome in the school;
- the school made it clear what standards of work it expected from pupils, and teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment;
- their children were encouraged to work to the best of their abilities and found school work stimulating and challenging;
- staff treated their children fairly, showed concern for their care and welfare and took action if parents raised a matter of concern; and
- parents' evenings and school reports gave them helpful information about their children's progress.

Some parents wanted more information on the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.

## **Ethos**

The atmosphere in the school was very good. Most pupils enjoyed being at the school. They behaved very well overall and took good care of their school. They were active in fund-raising for charity. Pupils had very good opportunities to contribute to school decision-making through the student council and various surveys of their views. Their attendance at school was above national levels. Relationships between staff and pupils were generally very good. Staff felt very well supported in their work and their morale was high.

Teachers generally set appropriately high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. Some did not make sufficient use of praise or the school's system of credits to encourage pupils' achievement. Many displayed a high level of commitment to providing additional support to pupils, through after-school study clubs for example. Pupils were encouraged to participate in a variety of local and national competitions. The school had done particularly well in raising pupils' aspirations and attainment at S5/S6. This included the setting of clear attainment targets for all pupils, and a range of appropriate responsibilities for pupils in S6.

The school had taken very good steps to promote equality and fairness. These included a recent detailed survey of pupils' views in which most indicated that they had not experienced unfair treatment or discrimination. Pupils with special educational needs were very well integrated into the life of the school. Regular assemblies provided appropriate opportunities for religious observance and the celebration of success.

## **School and community**

The large size and dispersed communities of the school's catchment area presented it with considerable challenges in developing a range of effective links. In spite of these constraints, the school had established a very good partnership with parents and good links overall with the local and wider community. Notable features included:

- very good communication with parents, including well-organised parents' evenings, and consultation on their views about the school;
- a supportive School Board;
- very good progress in working with the associated primary schools to ensure continuity in pupils' learning when they entered secondary school;

- pupils' participation in musical and dramatic performances for the community, and in organising events for primary pupils and senior citizens;
- strong links with local employers in providing work experience, work shadowing and mock interviews for pupils; and
- very good relationships with the local health service, resulting in various health promotion initiatives.

The school building included facilities shared with the community learning and development service. More co-operative planning was required between all of those involved in managing the facilities to ensure the best possible access for all users. There was improving partnership between guidance staff, community learning and development staff and support agencies in meeting the needs of particular groups of pupils.

## **Accommodation**

The overall quality of accommodation was good. The building and its attractive grounds were very well maintained. Teaching areas were generally spacious and well furnished. Some science laboratories had been refurbished to a high standard. Temporary arrangements had overcome the shortage of music practice rooms. Provision for teaching drama was limited. The new integrated accommodation for guidance and support for learning provided very well for pupils with a range of additional support needs, including behaviour support. Another strength was the well resourced and attractively organised library. Generally there were good displays of pupils' work and achievements around the school. There were good community sports facilities although pupils' access to the swimming pool was limited. Changing facilities for physical education were inadequate and were not appropriately separated to prevent access by adults using the community facilities. Access to the school building was not sufficiently controlled to ensure security.

## **Staffing and resources**

The overall level of staffing was very good. Non-teaching staff made highly valued contributions to the work of the school. The provision and quality of resources was very good overall. The good provision of information and communications technology (ICT) was continuing to be extended. While some departments used ICT very effectively to support learning and teaching, the quality of use was variable across departments. Devolved finances were managed very effectively. The school had made very good use of savings to provide additional ICT resources.

## **3. How well are pupils performing?**

### **Overall quality of attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good at S1 to S4 and very good at S5/S6. Most pupils were making good progress in their learning. In some subjects at S1 to S4 the pace and challenge of coursework was not always well matched to pupils' needs and aptitudes. At S5/S6, the pace of learning was generally good or very good, and assessment information was used very effectively to set appropriately challenging targets for pupils. Of particular note was the increased number of S5 pupils gaining five Higher awards in recent years.

### **Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Awards**

The following comments are based on examination data for the three year period from 2000 to 2002.

- The proportion of S4 pupils achieving five or more Credit awards at Standard Grade was well above the national average. Overall, the school performed in line with other schools with similar characteristics.
- The proportion of pupils achieving three or more and five or more Higher awards at A-C by the end of S5 was well above the national average. At this level the school performed better overall than other schools with similar characteristics.

- The proportion of S6 pupils gaining one or more A-C awards in Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) or Advanced Higher was well above the national average.
- The majority of pupils presented in S5/S6 for Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 examinations gained awards at A-C.

Information on attainment in the subjects inspected is given later in the report. Significant features of attainment in subjects not inspected were as follows.

- At Standard Grade pupils generally performed better in history than in their other subjects. They generally performed less well in home economics.
- At Higher level pupils consistently performed better in history than in their other subjects.

#### **4. How well are the inspected departments performing?**

##### **English**

##### **Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good at S1/S2 and very good at S3 to S6. At S1/S2 most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing and the majority achieved them in listening and talking. Attainment in reading and writing had shown considerable recent improvement. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving Credit awards was consistently above the national average. At Higher Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving awards at A and A-C was well above the national average. Pupils performed better in English at Higher than would be expected from their Standard Grade results. The proportions achieving A-C awards at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 were in line with the national averages. Almost all pupils presented for CSYS and Advanced Higher had achieved A-C awards.

<b>Courses</b>	Courses were good at S1 to S4 and very good at S5/S6. Teachers were given clear guidance on the requirements of the courses.
<b>Learning and teaching</b>	The quality of teaching was good overall and often very good. Teachers questioned their pupils skilfully and used homework effectively. Learning was good overall and conducted at a good pace. While pupils focused closely on their assignments, they were not given sufficient responsibility for their own learning. Their needs were generally met very well. Assessment arrangements were good overall. The assessment of listening and talking in S1/S2 was weaker, however. Pupils received very good feedback on their progress in reading and writing at all stages. The use of assessment information to set targets for pupils was being developed well.
<b>Management and quality assurance</b>	The principal teacher provided very good leadership. He had a high level of professional competence. He had developed very good teamwork in the department and had recently improved attainment in reading and writing in S1/S2. The senior teacher contributed very ably to the work of the department. Staff benefited from a very good range of staff development activities. All had had their work reviewed. Arrangements for quality assurance were good, but there was scope to apply them even more rigorously. Planning for improvement was good and development projects were implemented effectively.
<b>Priorities for action</b>	Attainment in listening and talking in S1/S2 should be improved. Pupils should be given more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning in S1 to S4. The good arrangements for monitoring learning, teaching and attainment should be applied even more rigorously.

## **Mathematics**

### **Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good at S1/S2, fair at S3/S4, and very good at S5/S6. Almost all pupils were making very good progress in their coursework, which generally provided suitable challenge. Most pupils at S1/S2 were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment, and this proportion had increased significantly in recent years. At S3/S4 the proportion of pupils achieving a Credit award at Standard Grade had been declining, and was now below the national average. However, pupils who had achieved a Credit award in S4 made better than expected progress in Higher. Performance at Higher was above the national average and had recently been well above it. Attainment at Intermediate 2 was in line with the national average and improving. Most of the few candidates presented for Intermediate 1 had achieved no award. At CSYS or Advanced Higher, a majority of those presented had gained awards at A-C.

### **Courses**

The overall quality of courses was good at all stages. Pupils required further opportunities to develop and use problem-solving skills. The department had recognised the need to develop the S3/S4 course to provide greater challenge for pupils capable of achieving Credit level.

### **Learning and teaching**

Teachers' interactions with pupils were very good overall. Teachers used a variety of approaches and explained concepts clearly, especially from S2 onwards. Pupils' learning experiences were good. Almost all pupils were well motivated and worked hard. ICT was generally well used to support their learning. Pupils' needs were well met overall. In S1, however, classwork lacked variety and the pace was too slow for some pupils. For some pupils in S4, tasks needed to be chosen more carefully to raise their attainment. Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress were very good.

**Management and quality assurance**

The principal teacher's leadership was good. Planning for improvement was good. The department had worked very well as a team to improve courses and the quality of learning and teaching. However, development plans did not always indicate clearly how projects had been chosen or their intended outcomes. The principal teacher monitored classroom practice, but insufficient action had resulted from this and other forms of self-evaluation. Attainment information, and other aspects of the department's work, were not analysed rigorously enough. As a result, some key weaknesses had not been identified. The overall quality of self-evaluation was fair. Arrangements for staff review and development were very good.

**Priorities for action**

The department should continue to improve courses at S1/S2 and S3/S4 to develop pupils' skills in problem solving and raise attainment. It should continue to develop the use of ICT. The principal teacher should improve approaches to self-evaluation and development planning.

**Chemistry and S1/S2 science****Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good in science at S1/S2 and in chemistry at S5/S6. At these stages, most pupils were performing well in their coursework. The overall quality of attainment was fair in chemistry at S3/S4 as coursework was insufficiently matched to pupils' needs. In Standard Grade chemistry, the proportion of pupils gaining Credit awards had been below the national average for the last two years. The proportions of S5/S6 pupils gaining A-C awards at Higher and Intermediate 2 levels in chemistry had generally been above the national average. In CSYS and Advanced Higher chemistry, the proportions gaining A-C awards were around the national average.

<b>Courses</b>	Chemistry courses were very good, but Standard Grade course materials were not always used to meet pupils' individual needs. The S1/S2 science course was good. It was being improved to enable pupils to build on the science they would learn at primary school.
<b>Learning and teaching</b>	In S1/S2 science pupils generally responded well to teaching which was consistently good and occasionally very good. Teachers challenged able pupils to some extent, but their approaches were too restricted to take account of the full range of pupils' needs. In chemistry teaching was generally good and most pupils were well motivated. Chemistry teachers supported pupils well, but made too little use of a variety of visual aids to improve understanding. Homework was well used in chemistry, but was relatively infrequent in S1/S2 science. Approaches to assessment were very good in chemistry at S5/S6. They were good overall in S1/S2 science and S3/S4 chemistry, but assessment information was not used well enough in setting appropriate targets for pupils.
<b>Management and quality assurance</b>	The principal teacher of biology provided very good leadership for S1/S2 science. His evaluation of the work of the department was good. Science staff had worked very well as a team to make significant improvements to the course. Leadership in chemistry was good overall. The principal teacher organised courses and assessments effectively, but needed to introduce a wider range of strategies for evaluating the work of the department. He needed to meet his teaching colleague more formally to plan improvements to learning and teaching. Departmental development plans often provided too little information about projects to enable their progress to be systematically monitored. Arrangements for staff review and development were very good in both chemistry and science.
<b>Priorities for action</b>	In S1/S2 science and Standard Grade chemistry, teaching approaches should be adjusted to ensure that all pupils progress at a pace appropriate to their needs.

In chemistry, teachers should make greater use of a variety of visual aids to improve pupils' understanding. The principal teacher of chemistry should improve approaches to departmental self-evaluation and monitoring.

## **Geography**

### **Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good at S1/S2 and very good from S3 to S6. Almost all pupils were making good or very good progress in their coursework. All S4 pupils presented for Standard Grade geography achieved success at Credit or General levels. The proportion of pupils gaining Credit awards was consistently well above the national average. The proportion of S5 pupils gaining A-C awards at Higher was consistently well above the national average. The proportion gaining A awards at Higher had improved and was well above the national average in 2002. Almost all pupils presented for Intermediate 2 gained an A or B award.

### **Courses**

Courses at all stages were good. All courses offered a good balance of physical and human geography. The S1/S2 course was being revised to take more account of pupils' primary school experience. Plans were in place to increase the focus on enquiry skills at Standard Grade.

### **Learning and teaching**

Teaching was very good. The teacher's explanations and questioning were used effectively to set appropriately high expectations for the quality of pupils' work. Pupils responded well to the brisk pace of learning and were well motivated by stimulating lessons. Tasks were well matched to pupils' needs and the teacher supported pupils very effectively in their work. Homework was used well. Very effective use was made of assessment information to provide pupils with regular feedback about their progress.

### **Management and quality assurance**

The recently appointed principal teacher led the department very effectively. She was a highly skilled

class teacher who had a lively enthusiasm for her subject. During her short time in post she had successfully improved aspects of courses and had further improved attainment. She contributed positively to the strong teamwork that existed among social subjects staff. Although the departmental development plan was too ambitious, the department had made good progress in implementing planned improvements. Approaches to quality assurance were good. Staff development activities were well planned and the work of the principal teacher had been reviewed under the authority's scheme.

**Priorities for action** The programme and assessment in S1/S2 should be further developed to help to improve the already good standards of attainment.

## **Art and design**

### **Attainment**

The overall quality of attainment was good at S1/S2 but fair at S3 to S6 where pupils' individual needs were less well met. Some pupils demonstrated high quality drawing and media handling skills. A majority were skilled in developing individual solutions to design and expressive activities. The proportion of pupils achieving a Credit award at Standard Grade was well below the national average. However, the proportion achieving a General award or better had improved in recent years to around the national average. The proportion of S5 pupils presented for Higher level was well below the national average, but in 2002 all pupils gained A-C awards. Just over half of the pupils presented for Intermediate 2 courses, and all pupils presented for Intermediate 1 courses, gained A-C awards.

### **Courses**

The overall quality of courses at all stages was good. The S1 and S2 course was being improved to ensure greater challenge and more consistent coverage of what pupils were expected to learn.

**Learning and teaching**

The quality of teaching was good overall. Most teachers ensured appropriate pace and used stimulating approaches, including effective questioning. Some teachers needed to share learning objectives more clearly with the pupils. Teachers' use of homework was inconsistent, and further improvements were necessary to improve resources and activities in classwork to meet pupils' varying needs. Most pupils were suitably motivated and worked well. The quality of their learning experiences was good overall in S1/S2 and S5/S6, but more variable and fair overall in S3/S4. The department made insufficient use of assessment information to predict future attainment, plan next steps in pupils' learning, and encourage pupils' self-evaluation.

**Management and quality assurance**

The principal teacher provided fair leadership. He had not established a strong sense of teamwork. He had provided staff with too little guidance, including advice on learning and teaching approaches. The department's approaches to monitoring and evaluating its work were not rigorous enough. Some appropriate areas for development had been identified but there was insufficient focus on improving attainment, particularly at Standard Grade. Some progress had been made in overtaking agreed targets for improvement. The departmental development plan provided too little information to ensure that development projects were managed effectively. Teachers actively participated in an appropriate range of staff development activities and their work had been formally reviewed.

**Priorities for action**

The principal teacher should develop a clearer vision for the department and should give a stronger lead in raising attainment. He should develop teamwork through building more effectively on the strengths of his staff, and make better use of planning and assessment to meet pupils' varying needs. He should improve departmental policies and advice to staff on learning and teaching, and raising attainment.

## 5. How good is the curriculum?

The overall quality of the curriculum was good in S1/S2 and very good at S3 to S6.

The curriculum at S1/S2 was suitably broad. While it was well balanced in most respects, too little time was given to religious and moral education. Very good curricular links with the associated primary schools were being established. To minimise fragmentation in pupils' learning, appropriate steps had been taken to reduce the number of teachers they met in the course of a week. For example, the teaching of ICT skills was covered very effectively as an integral part of the English course.

The curriculum in S3/S4 was suitably broad and generally well balanced. Almost all pupils studied nine Standard Grade subjects. One of these was social and vocational skills (SVS) which included a very good residential experience for all pupils in S3. SVS was used very appropriately to provide pupils with the National Qualification (NQ) core skill of working with others. In addition, religious and moral education was appropriately certificated in S4 using NQ units.

In S5/S6 the school offered a commendably wide range of NQ courses, mainly at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels. The majority of subjects offered courses at Advanced Higher, partly on a supported self-study basis, and some also offered courses at Intermediate 1. The school had made very good progress in providing pupils with the opportunity to achieve a wide range of NQ core skills for future learning or employment.

## **6. How good is learning and teaching?**

Teachers generally worked very hard to support pupils. In some courses, however, they did not give sufficient attention to meeting pupils' varying needs. Interactions with pupils were good overall, and often very good. Teachers gave clear explanations and most used questioning effectively to check pupils' learning. Some made too little use of visual aids to stimulate pupils and develop their understanding. Homework was often used effectively at S3 to S6, but less consistently at S1/S2. The quality of pupils' learning was good, and sometimes very good. At all stages, pupils were generally well motivated and worked at a good pace. In some courses they had too few opportunities for developing independence, initiative and responsibility for their own learning. Approaches to assessment were good overall. In some subjects they were very well developed and included clear learning objectives for pupils and systematic feedback on their progress. At S5/S6 pupils were set clear individual attainment targets against which their progress was systematically reviewed.

Procedures for reporting to parents were well developed. Reports were well structured and generally informative. Pupils' comments were usefully included. In some reports the advice given on how pupils could improve their work was too general. Overall, the quality of reporting was good.

## **7. How well are pupils supported?**

### **Care and welfare**

Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils were very good. Staff were sensitive to pupils' needs. They gave appropriate emphasis to minimising the occurrence of bullying and generally dealt effectively with any incidents that did occur. The school had plans to further improve the quality of advice to staff on child protection

by drawing on recent policy advice from the education authority.

## **Guidance**

The overall quality of guidance provision was good, with some very good features, particularly at S5/S6.

The quality of pastoral care was very good overall. Guidance staff knew their pupils well, particularly at S5/S6 where they had frequent contacts with individuals. They had good opportunities to teach pupils and undertook a systematic programme of individual interviews at most stages. While there was no organised programme of interviews in S3, guidance staff met pupils as necessary, and had contacts with them through the SVS course. Guidance staff were continuing to develop and further strengthen their links with support for learning staff and subject teachers to ensure that pupils who were causing concern were well supported.

The quality of curricular and vocational advice was very good. Interviews with guidance staff and helpful booklets assisted pupils and their parents to make well-informed subject choices. Careers education was very well supported by a specialist careers adviser and a good careers library. All S4 pupils participated in a well-organised work experience programme.

Approaches to monitoring pupils' progress and attainment were good at S1 to S4. At these stages guidance staff made good use of assessment information to review pupils' progress. They paid close attention to patterns of attendance, monitored homework, and responded well when subject teachers expressed concerns about individual pupils. There was scope for further developing methods of tracking the progress of all pupils, early in S3 for example, to identify and support any who were underachieving. At S5/S6, arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress were very good. Guidance staff and subject teachers co-operated very effectively,

with systematic, regular checks on progress to encourage all pupils to achieve their full potential.

The personal and social education (PSE) programme was good overall, but varied in quality through S1 to S6. It covered important aspects of health education, including personal safety, personal relationships and education about drugs. The school had consulted parents appropriately on key features of the programme. The principal teacher responsible for PSE and SVS had identified the need to review and improve the programmes in S1/S2 and S5/S6 to ensure they built on pupils' previous experiences. Methods of assessing and reporting pupils' progress in PSE had not yet been developed. At S3/S4 a very well-designed, certificated programme in SVS provided pupils with valuable experiences and skills. During the inspection, S3 pupils responded positively to a very well-organised residential experience which contributed significantly to their personal and social development.

The guidance team was well led by a deputy headteacher. Principal teachers of guidance worked effectively together and fulfilled their individual remits well. They were generally deployed appropriately to provide continuity of contact and support for pupils. Guidance staff were committed to maintaining and improving the quality of the service they provided. Weekly guidance and SVS team meetings provided good opportunities for them to review their work. However, until recently, there had been no development plan to assist them to focus on key priorities for improvement. With support from the deputy headteacher, the guidance team should continue to develop more systematic and rigorous approaches to planning for improvement.

## **Support for learning**

Provision for supporting pupils experiencing learning difficulties was very good overall.

Strong features of support for learning included the following:

- very good co-operative teaching involving support for learning and auxiliary staff in classes;
- very effective teaching for individuals and groups, including those with Records of Needs, in the support for learning base;
- high quality individualised educational programmes for pupils with Records of Needs and for other pupils with particular learning difficulties; and
- the effective involvement of S6 pupils in assisting younger pupils who had difficulties in developing literacy and learning skills.

The needs of all pupils with Records were regularly reviewed in consultation with parents and appropriate support agencies. Some Records of Needs required to be updated.

Support for learning teachers organised some helpful liaison with subject departments, mainly to prepare for co-operative teaching. However, these liaison arrangements were not used systematically for developing curriculum materials. Links with the guidance team to support pupils with behavioural difficulties were good overall. They were being developed even further to provide integrated support for all pupils experiencing learning and behavioural difficulties.

Pupils with behavioural difficulties were effectively supported in classes and in the study support base by support for learning staff. The staff were participating in a working group of teachers to further develop whole- school approaches to behaviour support.

A very small number of S1/S2 pupils with specific needs were receiving help in a support base for part of each week. Their curriculum was generally broad and balanced, although insufficient emphasis had been given to environmental studies. A suitable curriculum was being devised to prepare these pupils for entry to S3. Pupils in the base were making very good progress towards the clear and appropriate targets identified within their programmes of work. They participated fully in mainstream classes in an appropriate range of subjects.

The principal teacher of support for learning provided good leadership overall. She displayed a high level of professional competence and was committed to delivering high quality support to all pupils. Her teaching was a model of good practice. However, she needed to delegate more to others to achieve the improvements she sought in provision, and to build teamwork more effectively. Staff had taken part in a very broad range of staff development activities and all had participated in formal reviews of their work. Departmental self-evaluation was good overall, although the arrangements for monitoring learning and teaching were not rigorous enough. Planning for improvement was generally good and key development projects were effectively implemented.

**Priorities for action**

The S1/S2 PSE programme should be reviewed, and approaches to assessing and reporting on pupils' progress should be developed. The guidance team should develop more systematic approaches to monitoring all pupils' progress in S3. Approaches to quality assurance and planning for improvement should be strengthened. The

senior management team (SMT) should improve liaison arrangements to enable support for learning staff to assist subject departments in developing curriculum materials. The principal teacher of support for learning should delegate more tasks to her colleagues. The education authority, in conjunction with the school, should ensure that Records of Needs are updated appropriately.

## 8. How well is the school managed?

### **Overall management and leadership**

The headteacher provided very good leadership. He provided a clear strategic direction for the school that inspired confidence in others. He managed the curriculum very effectively and gave high priority to improving the quality of learning and teaching, and pupils' attainment. His management of change was fully supported by a strong commitment to the professional development of staff. His open and consultative style of management had ensured extensive involvement of teachers, pupils and parents in school decision-making.

The three deputy headteachers supported the headteacher effectively. As the SMT, they worked very well together and each made important contributions to the work of the school. Each member of the SMT was responsible for overseeing the work of a group of departments. The SMT were well regarded by staff for the support they provided. Sometimes they needed to be more rigorous in identifying and addressing departmental issues.

Most principal teachers managed their departments effectively. Senior teachers with whole-school responsibilities had been assigned rather limited remits. However, they had generally fulfilled these remits well.

The school had an appropriate set of aims which it used to guide development planning. Teaching staff were very well consulted and actively involved in policy-making. Non-teaching staff felt less well involved in the

decision-making process. A wide range of good quality policies had been developed. The key policy on learning and teaching formed a useful basis for self-evaluation.

### **Staff review and development**

Arrangements for staff review and development were very good overall. The work of all teaching and non-teaching staff had been reviewed annually. Staff development activities were carefully linked to school and departmental development plans. Expertise within the school was used to the full. All teachers were being encouraged to visit other departments to observe and learn from the teaching of colleagues. Those who had participated viewed the experience positively. Probationary teachers were very well supported.

### **Planning for improvement**

The overall quality of planning for improvement was good. Teachers and pupils were well involved in the process leading to the identification of school priorities. The school development plan included an appropriate set of targets which were well linked to national priorities. The plan itself was well structured, but action plans often lacked sufficient clarity on timescales and methods for evaluating success. The school had made good progress overall in implementing current projects. Departmental development plans often provided too little information about projects to enable their progress to be systematically monitored.

### **Approaches to improving quality**

Overall, procedures for school self-evaluation were good. The views of teachers, pupils and parents had been widely surveyed on a variety of important issues. The headteacher and other members of the SMT carried out helpful departmental reviews with principal teachers. Members of the SMT had effectively identified some departmental issues and taken appropriate and supportive action. However, the review process had not always been sufficiently rigorous. Departments used national quality indicators in preparing for their reviews. An improved approach to using these indicators for identifying

departmental strengths and development needs was being introduced.

The SMT had carried out some careful monitoring of classroom practice, although this was happening too infrequently to be fully effective. Several principal teachers had regularly observed their colleagues teaching and provided them with helpful feedback. This good practice should be adopted by other principal teachers. More systematic monitoring by SMT and principal teachers would support current moves towards improving the quality of learning and teaching.

The school's standards and quality report highlighted the school's many strengths, but made little mention of its development needs.

## **9. How well does the school perform overall?**

Speyside High School had many strengths. The very good atmosphere in the school provided a sound basis for effective learning. The curriculum was well developed and standards of teaching were mainly good or very good. Teachers, pupils and parents were very well involved in making evaluations of the school's provision with a view to making further improvements. An ongoing review of learning and teaching provided a very good opportunity to replicate the high quality practices which already existed in some departments. Potential remained to raise overall attainment at S1-S4 to reach the high standards achieved at S5/S6.

### **Key strengths**

- The ethos of the school, including the work being done to promote feelings of equality and fairness amongst pupils.
- The overall structure of the curriculum.

- The high level of staff commitment to supporting pupils generally, and the quality of provision for pupils with a range of additional support needs.
- The efforts made by the school in achieving high standards of attainment in S5/S6.
- The extent of consultation of staff, pupils and parents in school self-evaluation.
- The provision made for the professional development of staff.
- The leadership of the headteacher.

### **Main points for action**

In addition to addressing the priorities for action identified in this report, the school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- The provision of changing facilities for physical education should be improved, including the prevention of access to them by members of the public.
- The very good practice in target-setting in S5/S6 should be extended to other stages to help in raising attainment.
- Principal teachers and the SMT should improve their approaches to quality assurance through:
  - more focused and consistent monitoring of learning and teaching; and
  - the consistent recording of agreed action points as a result of departmental reviews and classroom visits.

- Development planning should be improved, particularly at departmental level.
- The education authority should review arrangements for joint planning between the school and community learning and development staff. The aim should be to provide the best possible access to the facilities in the building for all users.

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report, parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Dr T Straiton  
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
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership and with parents, School Board and the community
- Curricular and vocational guidance
- Staffing
- Provision of resources
- School management of finances
- Structure of the curriculum
- Pastoral care
- Learning support
- Leadership
- Staff review and development

### **We judged the following to be *good***

- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Reporting pupils' progress
- Accommodation and facilities
- Organisation and use of resources and space
- Implementation of legislation relating to SEN and disabilities
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities
- Self-evaluation
- Planning for improvement
- Monitoring progress and achievement

### **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 32% of cases, good in 61% and fair in 7%. 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](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Bill Maxwell, HMCI at HM Inspectorate of Education, Wellgate House (Level 5), The Wellgate, 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.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Professor Alice Brown  
The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman  
23 Walker Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7HX

Telephone number: 0870 011 5378

e-mail: [enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk)

More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website:

[www.ombudsmanscotland.org.uk](http://www.ombudsmanscotland.org.uk)

Crown Copyright 2003

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.