

**Tomintoul Primary School
Interim follow-through
The Moray Council
6 November 2007**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Tomintoul Primary School in November 2006. The report indicated that HM Inspectors would engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress and would publish an interim report within one year of the publication of the original report.

Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report. HM Inspectors carried out an interim follow-through visit to the school in September 2007. The team assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

There had been significant staff changes following the inspection. The headteacher and the support for learning teacher left the school in August 2006 to take up other posts within the education authority. The headteacher from Glenlivet Primary School took up post as acting headteacher in August 2006. In January 2007 she was appointed as joint headteacher of both schools as part of a pilot shared leadership arrangement. A new acting additional principal teacher was appointed in January 2007.

The headteacher and staff, with useful support from the education authority, had improved the range and use of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment in the school. Staff now made more effective use of interactive whiteboards installed in every classroom. Pupils could now access the Internet throughout the school. A number of pupils at the middle stages were showing effective skills in using wireless laptop computers for research and word processing.

School staff, working with parents and members of the local community, had successfully promoted pupils' awareness of the need to conserve their local environment. In recognition of this, the school gained the John Muir Trust Award in May 2007.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in November 2006 identified six main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Improve the quality of teaching, to ensure that all pupils' learning needs are met effectively.

The school was taking effective steps to address this main point for action.

Staff now used a wider range of teaching approaches and shared with pupils what they wanted them to learn. Teachers provided more varied and appropriate homework. Their

explanations were mostly clear and most lessons were structured more effectively. The support for learning teacher worked alongside class teachers to provide appropriate support to groups and individual pupils. Teachers were making better use of ICT to develop pupils' skills in a range of areas. Pupils, particularly those in the middle stages, used computers with increasing confidence. Teachers did not always take account of pupils' prior learning and attainment to ensure that all pupils' needs were met effectively. More remained to be done to ensure that teachers used questioning appropriately to check that pupils had understood what had been taught.

3.2 Improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences.

The school had made a promising start to meeting this main point for action.

Teachers now shared the purposes of lessons more effectively with pupils and ensured that pupils were more settled in class. Almost all pupils were well behaved, remained on task and were well motivated. At all stages, pupils now worked together well in pairs and on group tasks. Pupils were now clearer about what they had achieved and about what they had to do to improve their work. Teachers did not always provide tasks which challenged all pupils appropriately. More remained to be done to ensure that pupils at all stages developed effective skills in working independently.

3.3 Improve attainment in English language and mathematics.

The school and education authority had taken some effective action to address this main point for action.

School staff, with the help of education authority staff, had improved some aspects of pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics. They had not yet been successful in addressing long-standing weaknesses in attainment in these key areas. Pupils at the upper stages showed a good awareness of authors they had read and could discuss texts with increasing confidence. A few pupils wrote lively and imaginative stories at appropriate length. Across the school, pupils' skills in writing for a variety of purposes required further development. Most pupils spoke confidently and listened well to instructions and information. School staff had not yet developed a whole school programme for listening and talking and did not monitor pupils' attainment in these areas effectively. In mathematics, pupils had improved their skills in mental calculation and most performed well in the written calculations set for them. More remained to be done to improve pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in a number of areas. These included pupils' use of databases and spreadsheets, their awareness of decimals and their skills in problem solving and enquiry.

3.4 Improve the school's climate and relationships and ethos of achievement.

The school and education authority had made a very effective start to meeting this main point for action.

The headteacher and staff now worked well together as a more effective team. Relationships between staff and pupils had improved. Staff now had higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement, and almost all pupils responded well. Teachers mostly used

praise appropriately to encourage pupils, and pupils were clearer about the standards expected of them. More remained to be done to ensure that staff had sufficiently high expectations of pupils and maintained these consistently in all aspects of the school's work.

3.5 Improve the leadership of the school.

The school and education authority had made a very promising start in addressing this main point for action.

The education authority had provided additional staffing and resources. Education authority staff had visited the school frequently to provide useful assistance and advice on a range of areas. The headteacher had improved relationships within the school and had gained the trust of pupils, staff and almost all parents. She had implemented a range of appropriate care and welfare policies and had improved aspects of the curriculum including reading and the use of ICT. She had regularly sought pupils' views on the school's provision through frequent meetings of the pupil council. The principal teacher's role and remit were not yet sufficiently clearly defined. The headteacher had worked with staff in improving the school's procedures for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. These procedures still required further development to ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress in key areas.

3.6 Improve self-evaluation and the school's capacity to improve.

The school had made a useful start to meeting this main point for action.

The headteacher now monitored the quality of learning, teaching and attainment more effectively. She scrutinised pupils' written work in a range of areas and provided helpful written feedback on teachers' forward plans. The headteacher had visited classes to observe and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and had shared her evaluations with teachers. She met regularly with staff to discuss aspects of the school's work. These arrangements were not yet sufficiently systematic and rigorous. More remained to be done to identify appropriate areas for improvement and ensure that these were implemented consistently.

4. Conclusion

The school and education authority had taken promising steps to meeting the main points for action in the inspection report of November 2006. More remained to be done to address long standing weaknesses in attainment and ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress. The headteacher, working with staff, and with the support of the education authority, had the capacity to improve the school further. HMIE will continue to engage with the school and education authority and will provide another report on progress for parents and carers within one year of the publication of this report.

Robert D Barfoot
District Inspector

6 November 2007

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Educational Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. 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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