



**Aberlour Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Moray Council
24 August 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which children are involved. We also gather the views of children, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well children are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from children, parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

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

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class and resourced location where appropriate.

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1. The school

Aberlour Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Aberlour and the surrounding rural area. The school has a resourced location for children within the Speyside area who have more complex additional support needs. The roll was 165, including 26 children in the nursery and 7 children in the resourced location, when the inspection was carried out in June 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The quality of learning and teaching at the primary stages.
- Well-motivated, confident children who are keen to learn and who are achieving well.
- Teachers' success in sharing effective practice and improving the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, children are happy, well settled and appropriately aware of the nursery's routines. Through taking part in a broad range of activities, children are developing effective social skills. Almost all play well together, take turns and share materials. A few are engaging well with challenging problem-solving tasks. In the resourced location, children are happy in school and are developing appropriate confidence. All can express their views using a range of means and respond well to staff's praise. In the primary classes, at all stages teachers provide children with a range of high-quality learning experiences, and children respond well. Children are very well motivated and keen to learn. They can discuss their strengths and next steps in learning and are confident in thinking for themselves and in working in groups. Teachers and children work very well together to ensure effective learning. Children's skills in independent learning are developing very well.

In the nursery class, children are developing effective skills in using information and communications technology. They use the computer and interactive whiteboard well during their activities, and a few are confident in using a digital camera. Children's skills in investigating

and solving problems need to be improved further. In the resourced location, almost all children are making good progress in developing appropriate skills in health and wellbeing. Their broader achievements are recognised at assemblies as part of a reward scheme. Children in the resourced location recently won the Aberlour Spring Show art work prize. In the primary classes, children are gaining confidence and a strong understanding of what it means to be a good citizen. They serve on the pupil council and raise funds for a range of charities. Children at the upper stages work as buddies in the nursery class, early stages classes and in the resourced location. Children have a very effective awareness of how to care for the environment. As a result, the school has an Eco-Schools Scotland silver award. Children gain fitness and confidence through taking part in a range of sporting and cultural activities, including tennis and street dance. They are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and regular physical activity. The school has Health Promoting School status. At the upper stages, children are responding well in learning about parts of the eye and how light travels. In the middle stages, children are developing their skills in line drawing and in using a range of media in art and design. In the early stages, children showed a sound awareness of early life in ancient Egypt.

In the nursery class, most children listen well to adults and to each other and express their ideas clearly. Most children recognise their own names in print and almost all enjoy looking at books and discussing stories. Children's early writing skills need to be developed more. Children's early number skills are developing well. Almost all can count within ten and recognise simple patterns and shapes. In the resourced location, children are making good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Children listen well to staff and most interact well with each other. They are developing their understanding of early number and counting effectively. At the primary stages, almost all children are achieving appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics. Most are achieving these levels in writing. At all stages, children are achieving these levels earlier than would normally be expected. In the last few years, staff have been successful in maintaining a broad trend of improvement in these key areas.

Children who need additional support, including those for whom English is an additional language, are making appropriate progress. In English language, at all stages almost all children listen well to teachers and to each other. They use questions to check their own understanding and work very effectively in small discussion groups. At all stages, children read with appropriate fluency and expression. Children confidently find information from a range of texts and their skills in using the Internet for research are developing effectively. At all stages, children write at appropriate length for a wide range of purposes. Most produce a broad range of effective written accounts and stories. Standards of neatness and presentation in written work are high. In mathematics, almost all children are developing appropriate skills in written calculation. A few children's skills in mental calculation are not yet sufficiently quick and accurate. At all stages, children show a sound understanding of the properties of a range of angles and shapes. Children's skills in using computers to handle and display information are developing well. Children solve mathematical problems well, either as individuals or in groups, and use an appropriate range of strategies.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff across the school have made a very positive start to improving children's experiences, taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The curriculum includes opportunities for children to choose and to use their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of contexts. Teachers in the primary stages provide well-judged activities, for example in their *Egypt, Fair Trade* and *Rainforest* topics. These activities enable children to make effective links across their learning. In the early stages, children respond well to very helpful opportunities to learn through play. At all stages, children's skills in enterprise education are well developed. The headteacher recognises the need to improve programmes to build on children's prior learning in areas such as religious and moral education. Children do not yet benefit from two hours each week of high-quality physical education. Visiting specialist teachers enhance children's learning experiences in art and design, music and physical education.

In the nursery class, staff mostly set tasks and activities at an appropriate level of difficulty for children. They give children helpful individual support which assists them in their learning. In the resourced location, staff use well-judged approaches to meet children's needs. All children have individualised educational programmes which are drawn up with parents. Staff know children very well and support them appropriately. In the primary classes, teachers plan tasks and activities very well to meet children's learning needs. Tasks in key areas such as literacy and numeracy are set at the right level of difficulty for children. Teachers support children very well and children are confident in discussing their learning with teachers and with each other. Staff use their evaluations effectively to plan next steps for individuals and groups. Homework is appropriately frequent and varied.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

The school has very helpful partnerships with parents and the wider community, which support children's learning well. The headteacher works effectively with the supportive Parent Council. He keeps parents well informed about appropriate aspects of children's learning. Parents assist the school in a range of ways, including participating in activities as part of the Egyptian and Fair Trade projects. Teachers include children's comments on their own learning as part of informative annual written reports to parents on children's progress. The headteacher consults appropriately about health education. He deals with any concerns and complaints effectively, and should now ensure that actions taken are noted appropriately. Children benefit from the school's strong links with the wider community. These include support from local shops and a local shortbread factory. The local policeman assists the school in, for example, ensuring that children are aware of Internet safety. The school has effective procedures to support children entering P1 and children transferring from P7 to Speyside High School.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

The headteacher, children and all staff are very committed to improving the school. Teachers in the primary classes meet frequently to discuss and evaluate aspects of their teaching. They agree areas for improvement and assess the effectiveness of changes made. Working together in this way, they ensure a consistently high standard of learning and teaching across the primary classes. Staff monitor children's progress in reading, writing and mathematics and predict when children will achieve the next stage in their learning. The headteacher now needs to do more to evaluate the quality of provision in the nursery class and resourced location. The school takes account of parents' and children's views, through, for example, effective informal contacts and the work of the very active pupil council.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

Staff treat all children equally and fairly and have high expectations of children's behaviour, to which children respond well. Across the school, almost all children are caring, polite and well behaved. Teachers encourage children successfully to achieve their best and celebrate children's achievements effectively. Staff provide children with appropriately frequent opportunities for religious observance and prepare them well for life in a multi-ethnic society. The school has an appropriate policy for child protection and almost all staff are suitably aware of their roles and responsibilities. Children respond well to staff's care and commitment and know how to obtain help and support if necessary.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The experienced headteacher, supported well by his two principal teachers, has a clear vision for improving the school. He shares this vision well with staff and makes well-judged improvements, involving

them effectively. As a result, the school has a clear sense of direction. With the strong support of teaching staff, he has ensured that children's learning experiences and achievements are of a consistently high quality. With the continuing support of the education authority, the school has a strong capacity to improve further.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to develop the curriculum using *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improve monitoring and evaluating in the nursery class and resourced location to increase their impact on learning.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements. One recommendation was made, relating to self-evaluation in the nursery. Outstanding issues are carried forward in this report.

Quality indicators help schools and nursery classes, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a school and a nursery class. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publications *How good is our school?* and *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools and nursery classes are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Aberlour Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	very good
Learners' experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Robert Barfoot
24 August 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600 236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Where the school has a nursery class, you can contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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