



**Alves Primary School  
The Moray Council  
2 March 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, children and the local community know whether their school<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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.

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

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The school**

Alves Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the village of Alves, near Elgin and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 39 when the inspection was carried out in January 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

## **2. Particular strengths of the school**

- Well-motivated children and their positive relationships with staff.
- The quality of support for children who need additional help.
- Strong staff teamwork across the school.
- The school's approaches to self-evaluation and its commitment to, and planning for, improvement.
- The leadership of the headteacher in improving children's learning experiences.

## **3. How well do children learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

Children are keen to learn. Almost all listen attentively and respond well to instructions and questions. Children work well together and can talk confidently about their learning. They are developing good skills in evaluating their own work, and that of others. Children enjoy the regular opportunities which teachers give them to plan their own learning. Children work well with staff to set targets for their learning. They would benefit from more regular chances to discuss and review their progress.

Children achieve success both in and outside the classroom. Across the stages, they are developing strong skills in information and communications technology (ICT). Recently, children in P5/6/7 achieved success in film animation at the Moray Film Festival. Children are developing effective skills in art. At all stages, children have a good understanding of healthy foods and activities. Children at

the early and middle stages have learned successfully about how food is grown and prepared locally. Across the stages, children learn appropriate skills in road safety. Those at P7 successfully develop outdoor skills and work well together during residential visits. Children respond very well to a wide range of fundraising activities for charities which they themselves have selected.

Children make very good progress in their learning. Almost all children reach appropriate levels of attainment in listening, talking, writing and mathematics. Most do so in reading. Children who require additional support are making suitable progress. An increasing number of children are exceeding appropriate national levels of attainment and many achieve these levels earlier than might be expected. At the middle and upper stages, children enjoy reading for pleasure and can talk confidently about their favourite books and authors. Children listen attentively and readily express their ideas and opinions. At P2, children are able to write simple sentences successfully. By P7, children write well for a range of purposes. A few do not yet write at length sufficiently well. In mathematics, children at all stages are developing suitable skills in mental and written calculations. In the early stages, children can draw and interpret appropriate charts and graphs skilfully. By P7, children are developing skills in using spreadsheets and databases. Across the stages, children have a very sound knowledge of shapes. They are not yet sufficiently skilled in using strategies to solve mathematical problems. At all stages, children make effective use of ICT to strengthen their learning in mathematics.

### **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

Staff provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum. Well-planned visits to the school by a wide range of groups and individual members of the community help to enthuse children in their learning. Staff are taking good account of *Curriculum for Excellence* in improving the curriculum. They consult children well about their areas of interest and prior knowledge when planning topics for study. Staff successfully help children to develop skills in literacy and numeracy in

different curricular areas and activities. Children have very good opportunities to learn about the world of work and enterprise through well-planned Challenge Days. Visiting staff provide strong support for children's learning in art, music and physical education. Staff provide many positive opportunities for children to develop a good understanding of nature and environmental issues. All children take part in two hours of good quality physical education each week.

Staff provide a very welcoming and caring environment for learning. They work together effectively to plan tasks and activities which meet children's needs very well. In almost all lessons, work is set at a suitable level for children. Lessons take place at an appropriate pace. Staff know children very well and successfully identify the learning needs of children, including those needing additional support. Learning support staff and classroom assistants provide very positive and helpful support for individuals and small groups of children. Children with additional needs receive strong support. The needs of children with individualised educational programmes are being well met. Teachers plan their lessons well, making effective use of questions to check and develop children's understanding. Good use is made of praise to encourage children. Staff have identified the need to improve arrangements for homework.

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

Parents provide strong support for the school and work well with staff to support children's learning. The Parent Council has successfully organised a wide range of fundraising events which have enabled staff to improve resources. Most parents are happy with the school and feel well informed about their children's progress. Staff provide parents with a wide range of information about the curriculum, including sensitive health education issues. Parents are given very helpful information about how they can help in their children's learning. Parents have good opportunities to give their views or to discuss any matters with staff and most feel satisfied with these opportunities. A

few would like more information about how the school has taken account of their views. Most parents feel that staff deal promptly and effectively with any concerns or complaints. Staff have developed effective links with many agencies, including educational psychologists and social workers. Children receive strong support when moving from nursery into P1 and from P7 to Forres Academy.

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

Staff work well together and contribute effectively to children's learning and wider aspects of the school. They willingly take additional responsibilities, for example, by coordinating enterprise activity days for children and for important aspects of the curriculum. Staff are very committed to improvement and respond very well to opportunities to share good practice. Strong links with neighbouring schools provide staff with good opportunities for professional development. The headteacher regularly visits classes and provides teachers with helpful suggestions for improvements. Staff check children's progress regularly and this has helped to improve children's learning and attainment. Staff and children have positive opportunities to evaluate their own work and to set priorities for improvement. Children feel that staff listen to what they say. A few would like to have better opportunities to discuss suggestions for improvements. By P7, children are very good at taking on responsibilities, such as producing a regular school newspaper and organising lunch time games.

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

Staff and children are proud of their school and are very welcoming to visitors. Staff have high expectations for children's attendance, behaviour and achievement. Children enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. They feel that staff encourage them effectively to do well and that the school is helping them to become confident and responsible. Children find it easy to talk to staff if they have any

problems. The school helps children to keep themselves safe and healthy, for example, by encouraging them to make healthy food choices. Staff understand the school's child protection procedures. They encourage and celebrate children's achievements, including those taking place out of school, very well. Staff and children have worked well together to record various activities and achievements on an interesting DVD. Children are aware of the beliefs and customs of others and have suitable opportunities for religious observance.

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

The school shares its aims and values successfully with staff, parents and children. The headteacher provides clear direction and very strong leadership for improvement. She has worked very effectively to lead and encourage various developments to improve children's learning and achievement. She supports her staff very well and encourages them by example to have high expectations and to look for improvement. Under her leadership, staff provide a very caring ethos. Staff make a very strong contribution to school life and to children's learning and welfare. The school is well placed to continue to improve through building on existing good practice.

## **8. What happens next?**

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its school.

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

- Strengthen arrangements for setting and reviewing children's targets for learning.
- Continue to develop the curriculum in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

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 Alves Primary School.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>very good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Alistair Brown  
2 March 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](http://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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