



**Cromarty Primary School  
The Highland Council  
25 August 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school<sup>1</sup>. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the school is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the school does this. We describe how well the school works with other groups in the community, including parents<sup>2</sup> and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally, we comment on the school’s aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the school’s success in achieving these 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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, the term ‘parents’ should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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### **1. The school**

Cromarty Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the village of Cromarty and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 76 when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. There have been a number of staff changes. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

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

- Children's ability to work well together on practical tasks.
- The wide range of visitors to the school who enhance children's learning experiences.
- The promising start made to improving children's learning experiences.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Most children are keen to take part in their learning. They feel safe and included. All children are learning to cook a range of healthy, appetising meals in school with the very effective help of support staff. Children at P1 to P3 enjoy singing together and preparing for a musical performance. Children work well together in groups on practical tasks such as problem solving tasks in science. Those at P4 and P5 are learning about the forces of gravity and about floating and sinking through stimulating team games. Children in P5 and P6 created hot air balloons and made successful test flights. They have designed models and posters of their favourite British places and invited the community to visit and view these. Children are keen to express their views and share ideas. They are beginning to set themselves personal targets for their own learning. Across the school, children do not yet have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their learning in class and to help make the school better.

Overall children are developing self-confidence, demonstrating responsible citizenship skills and contributing effectively to the school and the community. For example, they respond very positively to work for an award from Eco-Schools Scotland. Children in P3 and P4

contribute well to a range of personal challenges to help them become more self-reliant. Children in P6 and P7 develop their self-confidence and social skills effectively through taking part in popular residential trips and football and golf training on the links. Children in P7 work effectively together through organising a healthy tuck shop, discos and a film and evening 'feast'.

Most children attain appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. In recent years, standards of attainment in these key areas have remained steady. Most children are making good progress from their earlier levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. In English language, most children listen attentively in class discussions. Children can discuss and share their ideas well in groups. They talk confidently about their interests and books they are reading. Most children do not read enough for pleasure. They are not knowledgeable enough about language, including Scots language. Most children's writing is well presented. Children do not write enough in other areas of the curriculum. In mathematics, most children are accurate in mental and written calculations. Across the school, children can interpret a range of graphs well. They are not skilled enough in using information and communications technology (ICT) to support their mathematical learning. Children are able to solve mathematical problems well using a range of strategies.

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

Overall, staff provide children with a satisfactory curriculum. They are at the very early stages of developing the curriculum in line with the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. They need to improve the opportunities younger children have to learn through play. Staff are providing two hours of quality physical education each week for all children. Visitors and visiting teachers of science and technology, physical education, art and design and drama provide valuable learning opportunities for children. Teachers are improving children's classroom experiences, particularly in reading and writing.

They need to help children apply their skills across different aspects of the curriculum. Children would benefit from more opportunities to use ICT to support their learning.

Teachers know children well. However, there are important weaknesses in how children's learning needs are met. Tasks and activities do not match learners' needs well. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment so planning does not take due account of what children already know. The pace of learning is not sufficiently consistent across the school to enable children to progress in line with their potential. Frequent changes of teachers for children at P5 to P7 has not helped to meet their needs. The quality of support for children with additional support needs is too varied. The school does not do enough to ensure that support staff work with children who most need support. A few children do not achieve enough success in their learning and need more focused support, for example, in aspects of mathematics. Teachers give clear explanations and share the purposes of lessons with children. They mostly encourage children to express their views and share ideas together. Teachers give clear explanations and share the purposes of lessons with children. Most encourage children to express their views and share ideas together. Most give children clear feedback on writing so that children understand what they need to do to improve their writing. This good practice is not yet consistent across other areas of the curriculum. Teachers give children homework tasks which help them to learn.

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

The Parent Council is very supportive of the school. It organises many successful fund-raising events. Parents provide football coaching and cycling proficiency training. They help children with reading and knitting. Members of the community help to look after the school garden. The school successfully welcomes a wide range of other visitors to work with children on stimulating practical activities. These include members of the Edinburgh Science Museum and the Bat

Federation. The school provides parents with helpful progress reports and information, for example on sensitive health issues. The school has appropriate arrangements for dealing with concerns or complaints. These need to be recorded more consistently. A significant number of parents are concerned about the effect on their children's learning as a result of recent staffing difficulties. Staff have productive partnerships with a range of agencies to support children's learning. These include the education authority's speech and language service and psychological service. Children take part in a full range of activities to support their move from P7 to Fortrose Academy. They are helped to make a successful move from pre-school to P1.

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

Across the school, children are keen to take responsibilities. Staff are beginning to provide more opportunities for them to do so. With the support of the Parent Council, they have successfully raised funds for playground equipment. Staff worked closely with the active schools coordinator to raise funds for a climbing wall. Children are beginning to contribute to the recently re-formed pupil council. Senior children help younger children experience success in their learning through the popular 'Tree group' activities. These include a range of sports and cultural activities such as dodge-ball, football and drawing. Children in the Eco-group are good at finding ways of reducing the energy wasted in the environment. Staff are keen to improve the school. Individually, their work is leading to improvements in children's learning experiences, for example in individual classrooms. Staff do not work well as a team. The school does not use self-evaluation effectively enough to help inform improvements and put them in place consistently across the school. Staff are not yet using information about children's learning to track children's progress effectively. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the support given to children are not working sufficiently well.

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

Most children are well motivated to learn. Most behave well in classes and around the school. They feel safe but a few are not sure that the school will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. The headteacher and staff need to raise their expectations of a few children's behaviour and monitor improvements in behaviour more formally. Most staff have positive relationships with children. They are committed to the wellbeing and support of all children and are knowledgeable about effective child protection procedures. The school needs to ensure that all staff follow guidelines rigorously to support the health and wellbeing of all children. Staff are mostly successful in promoting equality and fairness by including all children in all school activities. Children's achievements are celebrated around the school in displays and at assemblies. Staff successfully motivate children to work hard through popular 'community time' activities and rewards such as raffle tickets. Children are responding well to these. Staff do not have high enough expectations of what children can achieve in their learning. The school has achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland silver award. Children have regular opportunities for religious observance with the school chaplain.

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

The headteacher has successfully involved children, parents and staff in developing the school's aims and vision. Together, they now need to develop a shared understanding of how the school should develop and how they can work together to improve it. The school has identified appropriate areas for school improvement but progress in making improvements has been too slow. Staff lack direction on how to improve children's attainment and wider achievements. They need further guidance on how to improve their planning and children's learning. They need to be more actively involved in leading developments and improving the work of the school.

## 8. What happens next?

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the school has made.

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

- Improve the curriculum to ensure children make progress in line with their potential.
- Improve arrangements for supporting learning to meet children's needs more fully.
- Use self-evaluation to ensure continuous improvement.
- Strengthen teamwork and leadership for learning at all levels in the school.

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 Cromarty Primary School.

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

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

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>weak</b>

**HM Inspector:** June Graham  
25 August 2009

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This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

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