



**Crossroads Primary School  
Dunnet  
The Highland Council  
20 April 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**

Crossroads Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the villages of Brough, Scarfskerry, Mey, Barrock and also Dunnet Head and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 34 when the inspection was carried out in March 2010. Children's attendance was below the national average in 2008/2009. The headteacher has shared responsibility for leading and managing Crossroads Primary School and Bower Primary School.

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

- Children's ability to reflect and report on their overall achievements.
- Arrangements for meeting the needs of children who needed additional support.
- The school's welcoming and inclusive ethos.
- The active support of parents for the work of the school and the role played by the school in bringing together the local communities.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Children have a positive learning experience. In classes, children are settled and work well. Staff are taking positive steps to make learning active and enable children to take responsibility for their learning. By P7, children are able to reflect well upon their wider achievements. In the upper stages, children are beginning to contribute to the planning of their learning. These approaches are making learning more relevant and meaningful. The school should build on this work to create more opportunities for personalisation and choice in children's learning.

The school has successfully competed in the small schools swimming gala. Children in the upper classes have produced a range of imaginative art work including a large portrait of Robbie Burns. Children regularly take part in local events and festivals. Children from the early stages won the Nordic Shield for dramatised song at the Caithness Music Festival. Children in the upper stages won the tug-of-war at the Junior Highland Games. Children in P4 - P7 read regularly to children in the nursery. The school has developed

children's awareness of cultural diversity and global citizenship well through themed days such as World Book Day and a celebration of the Chinese New Year. Children have developed enterprising attitudes by making and selling decorations for the community Christmas Fayre.

A significant number of children in the school needed additional support. Across the school, the majority of children attain the appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Children cooperate well on group tasks and listen to teachers and each other well. Children in the upper stages have given presentations to their own class and children from Bower Primary School. By P7, they are able to explain their ideas but do not always do so with confidence. Children regularly read a range of texts, including novels. They are beginning to write about and demonstrate an understanding of the books they have read. In the upper stages, children write regularly for a range of purposes. From P1-P3 the range of children's writing is more limited. At all stages, standards of spelling and handwriting are too variable. Children are generally aware of what they need to do to improve their writing, but they are less aware of how to improve in other areas of the curriculum. Across the school, the majority of children are secure in using numbers. They are developing an awareness of patterns and sequences and are able to explain these. By P7, children are able to display information well using a range of charts and graphs. Children at all stages are learning problem solving strategies, but they are not always able to apply these strategies consistently. By the upper stages, children are able to use computers with confidence.

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

The school has taken some positive steps in developing the curriculum taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. Teachers are beginning to develop meaningful and relevant thematic contexts for learning. Children also benefit from a range of educational visits out of school. Specialist teachers of science, music, art and technology contribute well to children's learning. Children get regular access to swimming lessons.

However, they do not consistently experience two hours of quality physical education a week. Overall, courses and programmes across the stages of the school do not provide sufficient continuity and progression in children's learning.

Tasks, activities and resources meet the needs of the majority of children. The pace and challenge is appropriate in most lessons. Tasks set for homework support children's learning in school. The school has made a positive start to sharing learning targets with children. The school uses a staged approach to identifying children's additional support needs. The support for learning teacher makes a highly skilled and positive contribution. Planning for children who need additional support is effective and their needs are well met. Multi-disciplinary reviews are held regularly to inform parents of children's progress and involve them in the planning process.

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

Parents are positive about the school and feel staff are approachable. An active Parent Council provides very good support to the school. In the upper stages, the school has shared topic plans with parents. These plans provide clear information and create good opportunities for parents to be actively involved in supporting and contributing to their child's learning. The school provides regular reports to parents. These include thoughtful self-evaluations by children about their wider achievements. The school deals effectively with any concerns parents may have. There are effective arrangements for consulting parents about sensitive issues. The school plays an important role in bringing the local community together. For example, at celebrations such as the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the school. The school has developed strong links with the nearby nursery and works closely with Bower Primary School. Children in P7 work well with children from other schools and staff from the local secondary school on a numeracy transition project.

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

Children contribute to improving the life and work of the school by being members of the Pupil Council and Eco Committee or serving as a Junior Road Safety Officer. These approaches do not fully engage children in taking responsibility. Older children provide effective support to younger children and look after them well. The school has begun to produce annual reports on standards and quality. They include the views of children and parents. The school has a range of approaches for improving its work through self-evaluation. These include monitoring teachers' forward plans and observing learning and teaching. These approaches are not yet sufficiently focused on improving children's coursework, seeking children's views and involving them in evaluating their learning.

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

The school has a friendly, welcoming and inclusive ethos which actively promotes equality and fairness for all. Overall, children treat each other with mutual respect. Staff have clear expectations of children's behaviour. Their expectations of the quality of children's coursework are not sufficiently high. The school has appropriate arrangements for ensuring children are safe. Children feel they can speak to staff if they are upset or worried. However, the school needs to review why a number of children indicate that they do not find it easy to talk to staff. Staff have a good understanding of children's pastoral and health needs. Children are developing very positive attitudes to eating healthily. Regular assemblies provide appropriate opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher is responsible for both Crossroads and Bower primary schools. She has worked effectively with staff, children and parents from both schools at a joint training day to develop a shared vision for the schools. She has clear plans to take this work forward. Within Crossroads Primary School, teamwork and communication across all members of staff have not always been fully effective. Staff across all stages now need to work together better to agree, share and embed consistent whole school approaches.

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

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, 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. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in the school.

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

- Develop and implement agreed whole school approaches to improve continuity and progression in children's learning.
- Build on existing approaches to self-evaluation to ensure children's experiences are of a consistently high standard.

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 Crossroads Primary School.

Primary school

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

**HM Inspector:** Chris Webb  
20 April 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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