



**Drumoak School
Aberdeenshire Council
16 December 2008**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. 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 parents² 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. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class where relevant.

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

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Example of good practice
4. How well do children learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

1. The school

Drumoak School is a non-denominational school which serves the village of Drumoak, near Banchory, and the surrounding rural area. The inspection was carried out in September 2008 at which time the roll was 98. Pupils' attendance was above the national average in 2006/07.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children's motivation and active involvement in learning.
- Staff teamwork in supporting children who find learning difficult.
- Partnerships with parents and the community.
- The level of care for children and the strong promotion of health and physical activity.
- The leadership of the headteacher and the staff's commitment and teamwork in improving the school.

3. Example of good practice

- The school's use of "golden break times".

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children enjoy learning and respond very positively to teachers and support staff. They work well on their own and in most group tasks cooperate very successfully with others. They are making very good progress in English language and in most aspects of mathematics. Staff have improved the teaching of reading and writing and this is raising children's attainment in these areas. Children write very well for different purposes and their writing benefits from their interest in reading. They listen well and almost all talk confidently, expressing

their thoughts and opinions clearly. In mathematics, children are skilful in most aspects of number work and measuring. They have very good knowledge of shapes, though a few are less sure about angles. Sometimes, their mental calculation skills could be sharper. Standards in mathematics have been steady but now appear to be rising. Children use their literacy and numeracy skills very well across different areas of the curriculum. At P2/P3, for example, they are using their early literacy skills very well in studying Hot and Cold Lands. They have written mock letters to the Prime Minister about climate change. Children at P5 are very knowledgeable about safety issues and are compiling their ideas into a magazine. At P6/P7, they applied mathematical skills effectively when reading Ordnance Survey maps.

Children broaden their learning and achievements through a range of out-of-class activities. Many take part in sporting activities, including football, netball and cross-country, and play in recorder groups. They are building their confidence by performing in assemblies and school shows, and by helping to run school events for parents and the community. They are developing citizenship skills and a sense of responsibility by serving on various school committees or by helping to look after other children in the playground. These duties enable children to make a real impact on the school's ethos and environment. The school has gained an Eco School (Scotland) silver award.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Class teachers work very well together to review and improve the curriculum. In planning, they are beginning to take account of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are already adept at linking different aspects of the curriculum to make learning more meaningful for children. They have made learning more enjoyable and effective by increasing the number of practical activities at all stages. Play activities have been well developed at P1/P2. Visiting specialist teachers enhance children's learning in art, music, physical education, science and information and communications technology. Class teachers will need to collaborate more closely with them in developing

Curriculum for Excellence. Health promotion is a major strength and the school has successfully provided additional physical activities for children. Enterprise skills are well developed throughout the school. The expressive arts and religious and moral education programmes need further development to ensure steady progress in children's learning.

Staff meet a wide range of children's learning needs very well. They ensure that the work they give children is set at an appropriate level. Children are making good progress in their learning but some high-achieving children could be making faster progress. Teachers and support staff work very effectively together to provide high-quality support to children who find work difficult. Support for learning staff are highly skilled in identifying children's learning needs and work closely with them to set targets and discuss their progress. The school works well with outside agencies to help meet children's social and learning needs. Some class teachers clearly explain to children what they expect them to learn and recap lessons very effectively. This approach should be used more consistently across the school. Children have set personal goals to improve their learning. Teachers give them very helpful advice on improving their writing, but have yet to extend this practice effectively to other areas of the curriculum. Children often use computers well to support their learning. Some teachers make very effective use of interactive white-boards to engage children directly in their learning.

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

The school has developed very positive partnerships with parents and the community. Communication with parents is very good and includes some helpful information about the curriculum. The very supportive School Council has surveyed parents' views about the school. It actively promotes children's healthy eating and arranged recorder lessons for them. Several parents help in the school or with sports. School shows and events are very well attended. Local

businesses and members of the community played a major role in developing the woodland play area which enhances children's learning and physical activity. Close links exist with the neighbouring church. Children's social development is enhanced through organised contacts with children from other neighbouring primary schools. Transition arrangements are very good for children transferring from nurseries into P1 and from P7 to Banchory Academy.

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

Staff are very committed to improving the school. As a team, they continuously work together to improve children's learning experiences. The views of teachers, children and parents are surveyed regularly and used in planning for improvement. The pupil council, Eco School and health committees give children very good opportunities to suggest ways of improving the school. Children should be more involved in discussing how their learning might be further improved. Staff use national quality indicators to help identify the school's strengths and aspects for development. The headteacher visits classes to work with children and observe the quality of learning and teaching. He gives teachers helpful feedback. He works closely with them to monitor children's progress in reading, writing and mathematics. His monitoring of children's learning and attainment now requires a sharper focus. Some teaching is a model of best practice and teachers should develop their approaches by observing one another.

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

Staff set high expectations of children. They strongly promote positive behaviour through a system of rewards. Children are respectful and courteous and almost all of them behave very well. Staff feel valued and their morale is high despite the very limited accommodation provided for them. They use praise very well and display children's

achievements extensively. The school strongly promotes fairness as one of its key values. Overall, children feel they are treated fairly, although some feel that the reward system is not fair to all of them. Children with additional support needs are made to feel equal and valued. The school should further develop children's understanding of other cultures. Children have appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Staff provide a very high level of care for children. Senior pupils contribute very responsibly to the excellent level of playground supervision. Instances of bullying are handled appropriately. A minority of staff have yet to be trained in child protection. Staff give high priority to children's health and wellbeing. They actively encourage children to make healthy food choices. Well-organised playground games and activities make an important contribution to children's health and fitness. Access to toilets is awkward for the majority of children who are taught in portacabins separate from the main building.

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

The headteacher provides very positive and supportive leadership. He is very well regarded by staff and almost all parents. He relates very well to children and shows high commitment to their welfare. Staff work very well as a team and willingly take on additional responsibilities to improve the school. Children themselves have very good opportunities to show responsibility and leadership through playground duties and school committees. Following the appointment of several new staff, the headteacher is now leading a review of the school's aims and values. This will increase the sense of common purpose and direction already well established in the school. The school is well placed to improve further.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits following 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 schools.

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

- Further develop the curriculum to ensure that children make steady progress in all areas of learning.
- Continue to develop rigour in self-evaluation to ensure consistent best practice in children's learning.

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 Drumoak School.

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Tom Straiton
16 December 2008

To find out more about inspections or get an electronic copy of this report go to www.hmie.gov.uk. Please contact the Business Management and Communications Team (BMCT) if you wish to enquire about our arrangements for translated or other appropriate versions.

If you wish to comment about any of our inspections, contact us at HMIEenquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk or alternatively you should write in the first instance to BMCT, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

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 SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsso.org.uk.

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