



**Findochty Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Moray Council
15 December 2009**

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. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

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 or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Findochty Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Findochty near Buckie, and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 94, including 10 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in October 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The very effective start made by the current acting headteacher to improving the school.
- The welcoming ethos and positive relationships between staff and most children.
- Staff care for the welfare of children.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery class are happy and settled. They play well together and are developing confidently in their learning. Children are learning successfully to share and take turns. They are respectful of staff and each other. They are not yet involved enough in making decisions about their learning. In the primary classes, most children are keen to learn. They work well together and enjoy being active in their learning. They are starting to set themselves targets for their learning and behaviour. In the upper stages, a few children are not sufficiently attentive. The majority are able to talk confidently about their learning but are not clear about how to improve.

In the nursery class, children are making good progress in their development and learning. They are learning successfully to be more independent, for example, in following good hygiene routines. Children express their ideas well using a wide range of art materials. They are developing a sound awareness of the seasons through observing plants and the weather. Children enjoy solving simple problems through their play. Across the primary stages, children are developing strong creative skills through art and music. Those in P3/4 show a good understanding of life in Roman times. In P4/5/6, most

children are developing an appropriate understanding of global issues by looking at life in India. They respond well to fundraising activities for charities and enjoy participating in school shows and concerts. Across the stages, the majority of children are developing their personal and social skills well. Children have an appropriate knowledge about eating healthily. They do not take on additional responsibilities, for example, in looking after younger children or in leading eco activities often enough.

Children in the nursery class listen attentively to staff and each other. They speak confidently to adults and engage well in conversations. Almost all children can recognise their own name. Almost all pre-school children can write their names. They do not develop their writing skills across other areas of their learning enough. Most children recognise numbers and are developing confidence in counting. They recognise shapes well and are developing early skills in measuring. At the primary stages, the majority of children attain standards in line with appropriate national levels in listening, talking and reading. Less than half do so in writing and mathematics. There is no evidence of improvement in attainment. The school's assessment of children's attainment at the upper stages is unreliable. Children are not always confident in the national levels awarded to them. Children's progress from their earlier levels of attainment is too slow overall. In English language, the majority of children listen well to their teacher and each other. Across the stages, most children enjoy reading. The majority talk confidently about features of their favourite books. Children in the early and middle stages present their written work carefully. At the upper stages, children do not write carefully enough at length for a variety of purposes. In mathematics, children in the early stages recognise shapes well. Those in P3/4 are making positive progress in mental calculations. In the middle and upper stages, children are not confident or accurate in written and mental calculations. At all stages, children are not yet skilled enough in solving mathematical problems or in using information and communications technology (ICT) to handle data.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff provide children with a broad range of activities and resources. Staff encourage children successfully to make healthy food choices at snack time. Children have good opportunities to play energetically indoors and in the outside area. Staff plan children's learning experiences well and are beginning to take children's views into account. Children do not yet have enough chances to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy across their learning. In the primary classes, staff provide children with a broad curriculum. Visiting staff provide strong support in developing children's skills in art, music and physical education. Staff are beginning to develop a few areas of the curriculum, including mental mathematics, in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children do not yet take part in two hours of good quality physical education each week. In several areas such as ICT and French, planning does not yet build well on children's prior learning.

In the nursery class, staff meet children's needs well. They provide a very caring and welcoming environment in which children feel safe and secure. Staff know their children well through careful observations. A few children find activities too easy. In the primary classes, staff provide children with a caring and supportive learning environment. Tasks and activities are often too easy for children and do not encourage sufficient progress from their earlier learning. On occasion work is too demanding for a few children. Support staff are caring and helpful but the school does not use them well enough to support children's learning. Teachers make effective use of praise to motivate children. Most provide clear explanations but do not regularly share the purposes of lessons. Teachers use homework well to support and extend children's learning.

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

Parents provide staff with strong support for children's learning. A few help at school events and contribute to the school's arrangements for religious observance. The Parent Council has been very successful in raising funds to improve equipment in the playground. Almost all parents are happy about the school. Most are satisfied with the school's arrangements for asking their views. The majority feel well informed about their children's progress. They are satisfied that staff deal promptly with any concerns or complaints. Many parents are concerned over the time being taken to appoint a new headteacher. Parents are positive about their recent involvement in helping their children set targets for their own improvement. Staff have recently provided parents with well-received advice on how to help in their children's learning. Parents receive helpful information about the curriculum, including sensitive health education issues. Staff have effective links with agencies, including the home-school link worker. Staff prepare children well for making a confident move from nursery into P1 and from P7 to Buckie High School.

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

Staff make a positive contribution to children's learning. They are beginning to work well together to improve the school. Almost all contribute to after-school activities. A few are now taking responsibility for initiatives, for example, coordinating approaches to developing the curriculum. Staff feel that they now have better opportunities to discuss their views and to help set the school's priorities. They have responded positively to the recent reintroduction of visits made by the headteacher to observe children's learning. They appreciate her helpful comments and advice to improve children's learning. Staff are aware of the need to monitor children's learning and progress more thoroughly to improve the consistency of learning and attainment. The wide range of recent initiatives in self-evaluation, including sharing

good practice, has yet to lead to improvements in key areas. Children feel that staff listen to their views. They would like to have more opportunities to take responsibility for improving the school.

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

Staff and children are very welcoming to visitors. Staff have positive relationships with children and high expectations for their behaviour and attendance. Staff expectations for children's progress and learning are not high enough. Children enjoy school and feel very safe and well looked after. Most feel confident that any incidents of bullying would be dealt with effectively by staff. The school encourages children to be safe and healthy, for example, by ensuring regular brushing of teeth. Staff celebrate children's achievements well at assemblies and in displays of their work around the school. Children are developing a good awareness of the beliefs and customs of others. All staff are aware of the school's procedures for child protection.

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

Staff and children have recently reviewed the school's aims and values and shared these with parents. The experienced acting headteacher has led some important improvements during her short time in post. The morale of staff has improved and they now feel well supported and have a clearer sense of direction. They provide a caring ethos. However, too many children, particularly at the upper stages, are underachieving. The school will need continued effective leadership within the school and strong support from the education authority to move forward.

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.

- Raise children's achievements and attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of children's learning.
- Continue to develop the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence* to meet the needs of all children.
- Strengthen arrangements for monitoring learning and attainment to ensure that all children make appropriate progress.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation made which is being addressed.

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 Findochty Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

Improvements in performance	weak
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	weak

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	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

HM Inspector: Alistair Brown
15 December 2009

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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