



**Invergordon Academy
The Highland Council
16 June 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. We describe how young people 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 parents¹ and services which support young people. We also comment on how well staff and young people 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 young people 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 and details about young people's examination performance. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school and a report on the learning community surrounding 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.

Contents

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

1. The school

Invergordon Academy is a non-denominational school which serves Invergordon and the surrounding area. The roll was 449 when the inspection was carried out in April 2009. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Young people's achievements and behaviour.
- Learning experiences which meet the needs of young people.
- The highly committed and effective staff who encourage young people to achieve.
- Leadership for learning demonstrated by the headteacher with very effective support from the depute headteachers.

3. Examples of good practice

- Gathering effective feedback from young people.
- Supporting young people to achieve through coaching.
- Reflecting on learning and teaching in mathematics.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Young people are very keen to learn and enjoy working with their teachers and each other in almost all classes. In most classes young people are becoming more confident through working in groups and presenting their findings. Most teachers help young people to understand the progress they make and their next steps in learning. In most subjects young people use information and communications technology confidently to improve their learning. Teachers increasingly consider the views of young people when they plan tasks and activities to help them learn. Almost all young people are happy and feel respected and included in all aspects of school life.

Young people learn and achieve in a number of ways. They become more confident and develop self awareness by taking

part in a range of debates, meetings and enterprising activities. Across the school, young people are adopting healthier lifestyles. In S1, young people's progress against health targets shows that their fitness is improving. Almost all young people participate in fundraising for local charities such as the Highland Hospice, helping them develop caring and responsible attitudes. They have contributed to the local and international communities by working on the school travel plan and the 'Green Machine'. Most young people build their team-working skills by taking part in a range of sports and the very effective house competitions. Cultural activities including drama, orchestras and the film club broaden young people's skills and achievements.

Across the curriculum, young people achieve well in S1/S2. They make very good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their levels of attainment at the beginning of S1. The majority achieve appropriate national standards by the end of S2. In particular, girls' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics have notably improved. In recent years, the success of young people in S4, S5 and S6 in national examinations has been generally in line with the national average. It is stronger than in other schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Young people with additional support needs make very good progress. Staff ensure young people have very good opportunities to achieve when they leave school. Vulnerable young people are supported very well to develop skills which help them into employment or training.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff provide a good range of well-planned and personalised courses and activities for all young people. The school is developing links with local primary schools to improve the progress in learning young people make as they move from P7 to S1. These links should continue to be developed. The school is piloting work with Careers Scotland to help more young people make a smooth transition from school to work or further study.

From S3, young people choose from a good range of options enabling them to build on what they have already learned. All young people have the opportunity to gain valuable skills for work through college courses delivered in partnership with the North Highland College and Inverness College. The school also delivers very good courses in partnership with Balnagown Estate and the Forestry Commission. At S5 and S6 young people broaden their education further or continue to build on what they have already learned. Innovations include access to Open University short courses and use of the Active Schools coordinator to help young people gain sports awards. The school should provide more opportunities for young people in S5 and S6 to improve their understanding of personal and social issues. Staff are in the early stages of planning to implement *Curriculum for Excellence* and improving how they extend young people's skills. This includes planning to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all young people. In S1 to S4, all young people have two hours of good quality physical education per week. In S5 and S6 they do not have enough physical education.

Almost all teachers identify and support the learning needs of young people very well. They plan lessons carefully to make sure they are set at the right level of challenge for them. All staff, particularly the support managers, know the young people in their care very well. They provide innovative packages of support for those who are experiencing short or long term difficulties. Almost all teachers set good quality homework. Young people receive support in completing it at the very well attended homework club. Information about young people's needs is used well to plan their next steps in learning and keep parents well informed.

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

The school works very well with parents to improve young people's learning. The Parent Council actively helps to take forward developments which promote better learning. Helpful

reports to parents and parent meetings provide suitable information on how young people are progressing. The quality of the school's partnerships with local organisations to improve learning are very good. Most young people know about wider opportunities to help them achieve through, for example, youth groups, music and cultural activities. Working with the librarian, young people produce informative newsletters which keep parents and the local community well informed about what happens in the school. The small number of parental concerns are dealt with very effectively.

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

Young people have a wide range of very effective opportunities to have their say on how the school should be improved. The whole school e-mail system is particularly successful in giving all young people direct access to the headteacher. Young people have regular discussions with him about the quality of teaching and learning. These discussions help the school to improve aspects of teaching. Staff are very involved in improving the school through committee work, faculty meetings and attendance at well-planned professional development activities. Teachers use a good range of information to help them to decide where improvements to learning and teaching are needed. The well-organised programme of lesson observations by senior managers and faculty heads helps teachers to reflect on their work and make improvements where necessary. The active involvement of staff and pupils has helped to ensure improvements in young people's achievements, behaviour and readiness for the world of work or further study.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

Young people get on very well with each other and with members of staff. Members of the community speak very highly of their

caring attitude and determination to succeed. The school has very high expectations of what all young people can achieve and imaginative ways to reward achievement of all kinds. For example, young people like the reward system very much as it rewards participation as well as achievement. Plasma screens and daily announcements promoting their successes encourage young people to achieve in many ways. Particularly effective are the very lively assemblies taken by the headteacher. Young people feel very safe in school and know they can discuss any issues that are worrying them with a member of staff. They respect different cultures and enjoy learning about how people from around the world live. They develop a strong sense of equality and fairness.

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

The school has a very clear understanding of what it wants for its young people. This understanding focuses on meeting the needs of all and developing the best learning opportunities possible. The highly skilled headteacher is very well regarded by young people, parents, staff and members of the local community. His commitment, and that of the depute headteachers, ensures that the school continues to improve. The faculty heads carry out their work very well and continue to develop effective systems to monitor and improve the work of their departments. Teachers at all levels are keen to lead in a variety of ways. Young people develop their leadership skills in many ways. For example, they act as ambassadors for the school, organising school events and working with local councillors and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

9. What happens next?

The school's self-evaluation is leading to improvements in young people's learning. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more.

HMIE will make no further visits following publication of this report. The education authority will let parents know about the school's progress. It will do this as part of its normal arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools. We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to work with local primary schools and community partners to develop opportunities for young people to gain a range of learning skills.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *How good is our school?* 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 are doing. Here are the evaluations for Invergordon Academy.

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	very good

HM Inspector: David Gregory

16 June 2009

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

Crown Copyright 2009
HM Inspectorate of Education.