



**Mosstowie Primary School  
Elgin  
The Moray Council  
27 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**

Mosstowie Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the communities of Mosstowie, Miltonduff and Pluscarden. The roll was 60 when the inspection was carried out in March 2010. More than half the children lived outwith the local school area. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2008/2009.

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

- Very well-behaved, polite, confident and responsible children who are motivated to learn.
- The richness of learning experiences provided for children.
- Strong and supportive relationships with parents and the community.
- The work of the headteacher and staff in developing a strong culture of achievement throughout the school.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Almost all children are enthusiastic about learning. They give their views confidently about their work and can discuss what they have learned from their lessons. Children are clear about how well they are doing in writing and what they need to do to improve. They work together very well to build each other's confidence and to achieve success. Children at the upper stages take part in discussions in a very thoughtful and mature manner. They give well-considered responses to searching questions, for example, about how to support someone who is experiencing emotional difficulties.

Children achieve very well in health promoting activities during the school day. They experience success and apply their skills well in their topic work. Younger children can explain and demonstrate with confidence how to care for the environment. Children at the middle stages use information and communication technology (ICT) well to research their topics and present information. They are developing very effective touch-type keyboard skills. Children at the upper stages

are developing their literacy skills well using stimulating moving image technology. Children demonstrate citizenship skills by showing responsibility and by contributing well to the school and the community. For example, they help with work on the environment and health promotion. Children achieve success in a variety of sports and cultural activities. These include football, hockey, badminton, cross-country running and walking. All children perform to good effect in events such as the school pantomime and the 'Mossie Factor'. Children are successful in many musical and sporting competitions.

Almost all children attain appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics. Most do so in writing. Children are making very good progress from their earlier levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and mathematics, and good progress in writing. In English language, almost all children listen attentively in class discussions and talk confidently about their interests and books they are reading. They are able to find information well from a variety of sources including dictionaries and the Internet. Almost all children read fluently and with good expression. They discuss and share their ideas very well in groups. Children's writing is occasionally too short and spelling and presentation need to be better. In mathematics, across the school, almost all children are accurate in mental and written calculations. They can interpret a range of graphs well. Children at the early stages have made a class bar chart. At the middle stages, children use ICT effectively to handle information using simple spreadsheets. Children at the upper stages can identify shapes and symmetry and they can measure angles confidently. They are able to solve mathematical problems together well.

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

Staff provide children with a good curriculum overall. They are beginning to develop the curriculum taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff use approaches which encourage active learning, for example, in developing literacy skills. They provide motivating opportunities for children at the early stages to learn through doing. Staff need to help children apply their numeracy skills across different

aspects of the curriculum. Staff make very effective use of visits, visitors and specialist teachers in music, art and design and physical education to make learning more interesting for children. Staff are providing all children with at least two hours of high-quality physical education each week.

Staff know children very well and support their learning needs effectively in the classroom. They provide children with a very caring and nurturing environment. Tasks, activities and resources are well matched to the learning needs of children, including high-achieving children. Staff have begun to take good account of children's interests and ideas when planning activities. Teachers give helpful explanations and make effective use of questioning to check children's understanding and extend their learning. They need to give children more opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Support staff help to identify and support the needs of children who have difficulties with their learning well. The way additional support for children who have learning needs is organised needs to be improved. Homework needs to be more varied at few stages to encourage children to learn more.

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

The school has strong partnerships with parents. Parents appreciate the care and commitment the headteacher and staff give to providing their children with a broad range of experiences. They help with outings and run a range of after-school clubs. These include rugby for P1 to P3 children and a nature club for those at P4 to P7. The Parent Council supports the school very well through stimulating fundraising events. Staff communicate with parents very well through regular newsletters and questionnaires. They give parents helpful information about their children's progress through meetings and written reports. The school responds effectively to parental enquiries and any complaints. Staff consult parents appropriately about health education. Home-school diaries give parents a clear understanding of

what their children are learning and how they can help. The school has strong relationships with the local community, including the local abbey and businesses. Staff work productively with a range of support services. The school has good links with other schools in the local area, for example through team sports. Staff prepare children well for their transfer from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1 at Elgin High School.

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

Children are keen to take on responsibilities. As a result of their efforts, the school has gained a silver award from Eco-Schools Scotland. House captains ensure children contribute well to decisions on how they can help to improve the school and the wider community. Children raised substantial funds for playground equipment and games with the support of local businesses. As a result, children are now benefiting from an exciting selection of toys and games at playtimes. Staff are involved in developing areas such as Eco-Schools, the school website and health promotion. They set appropriate priorities for improvement and meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss individual children's learning and progress. This work has led to improvements in the rate at which children learn. Staff need to evaluate their work together more rigorously, taking account of children's successes and achievements. They need to develop their leadership roles across the curriculum further.

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

The school is very welcoming. Children are proud of their school. They behave very well and are respectful of others' feelings and opinions. The school has effective strategies in place to encourage children to attend. Children feel safe and they are confident that staff will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. Staff have very positive relationships with children. They are committed to the

wellbeing and support of all children and are knowledgeable about child protection procedures. The school has a strong culture of achievement. Staff have high expectations of what children can attain and achieve and children respond positively to these. Children's achievements in and out of school are celebrated regularly through attractive photographic wall displays. Children understand the importance of making healthy choices at lunch times and know ways of staying safe and healthy. These include the many health promoting games and sports that are part of their everyday play. Staff promote equality and fairness well and develop children's awareness of different cultures. Children have regular opportunities for religious observance.

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

The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, children and parents. Her vision for the school has helped to create a strong culture of ambition and achievement amongst staff and children. The headteacher is a very effective role model in helping staff to develop new learning activities and ways of teaching. As a result, children across the school have more consistent, active learning experiences. Staff are strongly committed to making further improvements and they respond very positively to the leadership of the headteacher. The quality of the school's self-evaluation has improved. The headteacher now needs to give staff clearer direction on leading and evaluating new initiatives in the curriculum.

## **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.

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

- Continue to develop *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improve self-evaluation to increase its impact.

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 Mosstowie Primary School.

Mosstowie Primary School

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

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

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

**HM Inspector:** June Graham  
27 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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