



**St Gerardine Primary
School and Nursery Class
Lossiemouth
The Moray Council
24 August 2010**

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.

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

St Gerardine Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves part of the Seatown and Branderburgh areas of Lossiemouth. The roll was 327, including 39 in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in June 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009. The current headteacher has been in post since November 2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children's awareness of, and commitment to, environmental issues.
- Children's enthusiasm for reading and the quality of their writing.
- The contribution of support staff to children's learning.
- The headteacher's commitment and positive approaches which are improving children's learning.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are happy and settled in nursery. They are actively involved in learning through play and enjoy a variety of experiences. They like making choices in their play and can select confidently from a range of activities. Children work well together and are learning to share and take turns. They are very enthusiastic about imaginative play in their chosen activities. Children are not yet confident enough in talking about and planning their learning. In the primary classes, most children are keen to learn. They work well independently and most cooperate well in small groups. Children are developing confidence in discussing and evaluating their learning. They are not always clear about how to improve it. Children do not use information and communications technology (ICT) in their learning often enough.

In the nursery class, children are making good progress in their development. They are achieving well in a number of areas and becoming confident. Children are developing independence across the nursery. They are becoming aware of the needs and feelings of others. Children enjoy celebrating their successes and are proud of

their work. Across the primary stages, children are developing a very good awareness of environmental issues. They make a strong contribution to improving the environment by engaging well in eco activities. Almost all children respond positively to opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. The active travel group works well to encourage children to walk or cycle to school and parents to park safely. Children show care for others by taking part in regular fundraising activities for a wide range of charities. At P7, almost all children learn new outdoor skills and work well together during an annual residential experience.

Children in the nursery class are making good progress in early language and mathematics. They talk confidently and imaginatively with each other in play activities and listen well to adults. Children enjoy looking at books and talking about parts of their favourite stories. Almost all children recognise their name in print and some are recognising individual letters and sounds. Most children can identify and use numbers to ten during play activities and counting games. A few older children can count confidently beyond ten. Children are developing an awareness of size and shape and use mathematical language well in measuring games. At the primary stages, children make good progress in their learning. Most children attain appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. Many children achieve these levels earlier than might be expected, particularly in reading. Children's attainment in reading and writing has improved over recent years. Across the stages, children enjoy reading and most read aloud well. They are keen to talk about their books and give opinions on the plot and characters. Children write for a variety of purposes. Most children at the upper stages write well at length and are developing good skills in punctuation. In mathematics, most children are developing confidence in mental and written number skills. At the middle stages, a sizeable number of children make too slow progress from their earlier levels of attainment. Across the stages, almost all children can present and interpret information in bar graphs. They do not yet use ICT enough to create charts. Children are familiar with a wide range of strategies for solving mathematical problems and can apply these successfully.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff plan a broad range of experiences for children based on active learning and play. They provide appropriate opportunities across most aspects of children's development and learning. Staff should continue with planned improvements to the outdoor area to enhance children's learning and physical development. They have recognised the need to plan more closely with staff in the early primary classes to ensure better continuity in children's learning. In the primary classes, staff provide children with a broad curriculum. Children have good opportunities to develop skills in literacy across different areas of the curriculum. Staff should strengthen opportunities for children to develop skills in numeracy. The curriculum provides positive opportunities for children to develop an understanding of rights and responsibilities. Children are becoming more aware of equality and cultural issues as a result of the *Rights Respecting School* initiative and growing international links. Staff in the nursery and primary classes should develop stronger links with the local community to enrich children's learning. Children do not yet take part in two hours of good quality physical education each week.

In the nursery class, staff meet children's needs well. Staff provide children with good opportunities to make choices and follow their own interests. An appropriate range of resources is available to meet the needs of most children. Staff should develop approaches to observe and record children's play to help them plan the next steps in their learning. At the primary stages, most staff provide a supportive learning environment. Most children feel safe and well looked after. In the majority of lessons, tasks and activities are well matched and at an appropriate pace to meet children's learning needs. In some lessons, whole-class activities are too easy for higher-achieving children but too demanding for others. Learning auxiliaries and classroom assistants provide children with very positive and helpful support. Staff are improving approaches to identifying children who would benefit from additional support. They should review the deployment of support for learning staff to ensure that they work with those children who need help most and that all teaching staff take appropriate responsibility for

meeting children's needs. Almost all teachers provide clear explanations and share the purposes of lessons well. The majority make effective use of praise to motivate children.

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

Parents feel welcome in the nursery and have good opportunities to discuss and share information with staff. Staff are developing partnerships with parents and have recently established a parents' focus group to help suggest and plan further improvements. At the primary stages, the Parent Council provides positive support. Parents help staff to organise sports, concerts and charity events. Most parents are happy with the school. A few feel that concerns they have had have not been resolved promptly. Some feel that this has improved recently, however. Parents would like to have more opportunities to give their views and would welcome more information from teachers about their children's progress. Staff should continue to address these issues and respond appropriately. Children are well supported in moving from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Lossiemouth High School.

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

Staff contribute positively to children's learning. Almost all are now involved in working together in groups to share and develop good practice. A few have willingly taken on additional responsibility, for example, in leading important developments. All staff should build on this good start to extend their involvement in working together and in taking a leading role in school improvements. Staff have good opportunities for their own professional development. Across the stages, children are good at taking responsibility. Those at P5 to P7 work well with younger children in class and around the school. Recent improvements to the school's approaches for evaluating

children's learning and progress are very positive. Senior staff visit classes and provide teachers with helpful and detailed advice. The headteacher meets groups of children to discuss their learning. She should continue to meet regularly with teachers to discuss their planned teaching and review the progress of individual children.

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

Staff have high expectations for children's attendance and behaviour and provide good opportunities for children to act responsibly. Almost all children behave well in class and around the school. Overall, most staff have appropriate expectations for children's learning. However, they need to ensure that learning activities are consistently at the right level of difficulty and make more effective use of homework to support children's learning in class. Most children enjoy school and almost all are confident they will get help if they need it. Staff encourage children to keep themselves safe and healthy and are aware of the school's child protection procedures. Children show an appropriate awareness of the beliefs and customs of others. They have good opportunities for religious observance. Staff use assemblies and interesting displays of work to celebrate children's achievements.

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

The new headteacher has a clear vision for improving the school. She has made a very positive start and is quickly gaining the respect of parents. She knows the school well and has accurately identified its strengths and those areas which need to be improved. Well-judged arrangements for checking the quality of children's learning and progress have been established. The acting depute provides strong support. Staff respond well to opportunities to enhance their own skills and a few are beginning to take responsibility for leading important developments. The headteacher has judged the pace of change well. Most staff have responded very positively. She should now ensure that her vision for further improvement is implemented by all staff. In

doing so, she should build on the good start made in distributing responsibility for leading improvements more widely.

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 the curriculum taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Ensure that all learning activities are at the right level of difficulty and that any difficulties children have in learning are addressed promptly.
- Continue to improve ways of involving parents and the local community more in supporting children's learning.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation made, which has been partially addressed. Outstanding issues are carried forward in this report.

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 St Gerardine Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

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	good

HM Inspector: Alistair Brown
24 August 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 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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