



**Stratherrick Primary School  
The Highland Council  
25 August 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. 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 parents<sup>1</sup> 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](http://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.

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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.

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### **1. The school**

Stratherrick Primary School is a non-denominational school. It serves the village of Gorthleck and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 26 when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. The school has had frequent changes in leadership over the previous three years. The present acting headteacher had been in post for ten months.

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

- Confident, friendly children who work hard and enjoy learning.
- Partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- The success of staff in making learning interesting and relevant for children.

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

### **Learning and achievement**

Children are highly motivated and almost all work hard to complete their class work successfully. They are very confident and contribute well to class and group activities. Children in P4 to P7 enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning when appropriate. They are developing a good awareness of what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers take children's interests into account when planning activities. Children contribute their ideas for topics to study and often choose how to record and present what they have learned. As a result, children tell us that they find their work interesting and enjoyable.

Children respond very well to the many opportunities they have to extend their achievements. They are gaining a good understanding of aspects of recycling and energy conservation through their work towards a green flag from Eco-Schools Scotland. They understand the importance of healthy eating and taking exercise. Children in P4 to P7 are developing good leadership skills by organising daily exercise sessions for younger children. Most children gain a strong sense of personal success through taking part in arts and sporting activities arranged by teachers and the active schools coordinator.

In recent years, standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics have remained high with most children achieving appropriate national levels. Those not achieving these levels receive support and are making appropriate progress in their class work. In English language across the school, children listen well to instructions and explanations. Group discussions are lively and productive. Children are developing good skills in reading for information and regularly read for enjoyment. They use their writing skills well in different areas of the curriculum. Standards of presentation of written work are not consistently high. In mathematics, most children at all stages work accurately with numbers, both in mental and written calculations. They use displays of information effectively and have a sound knowledge of shapes and angles. Their ability to identify and use problem solving strategies is less well developed.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

Teachers provide a broad range of stimulating experiences for children. They have begun to develop the curriculum to take account of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children respond well to opportunities to be actively involved in learning and apply their skills across different areas of the curriculum. They are applying their literacy and numeracy skills in relevant contexts. For example, children have measured the perimeter of the playground to calculate how many laps they need to do to complete a two kilometre walk. Those in the P2/3 class have used their measurement skills to weigh envelopes when playing in the classroom post office. Teachers use information and communications technology well to support learning and know that they need to develop this further. All children do not yet receive two hours of good quality physical education each week. Visiting teachers of music, art and physical education successfully help children to express themselves creatively. At the early stages, teachers provide opportunities for children to learn through play. They should build on this further.

Teachers and the classroom assistant provide children with effective support for learning. Relationships between staff and children are

positive. Teachers take good steps to ensure that tasks are well matched to most children's interests and levels of ability. Sometimes tasks are too easy for high achieving children. Staff should continue to work together to ensure a consistent experience for all children. Teachers explain clearly what they expect children to learn. In most lessons, they involve children in evaluating their work and in thinking about how to improve it. The acting headteacher has introduced effective measures for tracking children's attainment and this is improving the pace of progress for most children. As a result, children feel happier and more positive about learning. Teachers and parents have reviewed approaches to homework together. Homework tasks are now more varied and better linked to class work.

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

The acting headteacher is working successfully to improve partnerships with parents. The Parent Council is very supportive of the school. Parents raise funds and help in a variety of ways, including working in the school garden and helping with visits. The school responds promptly to any concerns that parents may raise. Teachers organise well-received meetings to provide parents with information about changes to learning and teaching. The acting headteacher seeks the views of parents and involves them in their children's learning. Parents particularly appreciate the open invitation to attend weekly assemblies and find the weekly 'Home from School' reports very informative. They are well informed about their children's progress through meetings with staff and annual written reports. Teachers work well with other professionals to support children requiring additional help, involving children and parents in the process. They ensure that children are well supported as they move from pre-school to P1 and from P7 to Inverness Royal Academy.

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

The acting headteacher, with support from the education authority, is making a sound start in evaluating the school's effectiveness. He shares his evaluations with staff and involves them in reviewing their work and the overall quality of children's experiences. He monitors plans and classroom practice, giving helpful feedback to teachers. The acting headteacher and staff are successfully improving aspects of children's learning and attainment. Children identify strongly with their school. Through the pupil council and daily contact with staff, they contribute their views, and help to improve the school community. Children's views have shaped the work being done this session towards achieving a second green flag. Children choose the activities for their after-school club. They now need more opportunities to say how their learning might be improved.

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

Teachers and support staff ensure children's welfare and wellbeing and have an effective understanding of child protection procedures. Children are treated fairly and with respect. They have told us that they feel safe and can talk to an adult if they have a concern. Teachers help children to achieve and to develop positive attitudes to themselves and others. They have high expectations of children's attendance and behaviour and deal sensitively with any inappropriate behaviour. Teachers are raising their expectations of children's attainment and achievement. This is beginning to result in improved performance in aspects of learning, for example in children's writing. Children are proud of their achievements which are celebrated at assemblies, in newsletters and in attractive displays around the school. There are regular opportunities for religious observance.

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

The acting headteacher has a clear view on how he would like the school to develop. He shares his plans with parents and is contributing significantly to the positive climate within the school. His own teaching is a model of effective practice. Overall, he has a positive influence on the school's work. Teachers are creating a positive and inclusive climate for learning and parents feel much more involved in their children's education. Children are becoming confident and well-motivated learners. With continuing support from the education authority, Stratherrick Primary School has the capacity to improve further.

## **8. What happens next?**

We are confident that 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 following 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.

- Ensure work is consistently at the right level for all children.
- Continue to strengthen the curriculum.
- Continue to use self-evaluation effectively to improve outcomes for children.

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 Stratherrick Primary School.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>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>good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Isabel Bolton  
25 August 2009

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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