

**Cabrach Primary School
The Moray Council**

9 October 2001

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Cabrach Primary School The Moray Council

1. Introduction

Cabrach Primary School was inspected in June 2001 as part of a national sample of primary education.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated how well pupils were performing, the effectiveness of the school and how well the school was managed.

HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. They assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language, mathematics, and science.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents.

2. The school

The school serves a rural area around the hamlet of Cabrach. At the time of the inspection the roll was eight.

Parents' views

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were generally pleased with the work of the school.

All thought that:

- their children enjoyed being at school and found their school work challenging;
- their children were treated fairly and would be helped if they were having difficulties; and
- the standards of behaviour in the school were good.

One parent who responded felt that the school could do more to explain its work.

Ethos

The school had a good ethos. The atmosphere was friendly. Pupils were polite, well behaved and welcoming to visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils were very positive and the pupils interacted well with each other. Staff had high expectations of pupils and encouraged them to do well. Although teachers made good use of praise in the classroom, the school did not sufficiently reward and recognise achievement. There were insufficient opportunities for religious observance.

School and community

The school had established good relationships with parents, other schools and the wider community. Positive features included:

- good communication with parents through an attractive school handbook and regular letters;
- very good induction arrangements for children entering P1;
- productive links with other small primary schools; and
- very good use made of the local area for educational visits.

Reports to parents gave helpful information about their children's progress, but did not always state clearly what pupils should do to improve their learning.

Accommodation

The school had very attractive and well-maintained accommodation. Teaching was carried out in a large, bright room divided into areas for different activities. Pupils and staff also ate lunch there. Pupils' work was well displayed on the classroom walls. There were very good facilities for outdoor play.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed by experienced teachers. Ancillary staff made valuable contributions to the life of the school and provided valuable support for teachers and pupils.

The school had a very good range of resources, including very good provision of computers. The headteacher managed the school's devolved finances very well and had used the budget to enhance resources for learning and teaching.

3. How well are pupils performing?

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Almost all pupils coped well with their coursework, which was generally appropriately challenging. They listened attentively and could recall what they had heard. In group discussions they gave appropriate responses and expressed their ideas and feelings well. Almost all pupils were making good progress in reading. They were able to extract appropriate information from texts. Those at the upper stages made good use of reference books and computers to access information. However, they did not always have sufficient opportunities to discuss a wide range of texts. Almost all pupils wrote well for a variety of purposes, but those at the upper stages did not always

write at sufficient length. Written work was well presented and spelling was generally accurate. At all stages pupils made good use of computers to word process their work. All pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in *listening, talking, reading and writing*.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Almost all pupils coped well with their coursework, which was generally appropriately challenging. They had a good knowledge of number and could perform mental calculations accurately. Those at the early stages had very good understanding of the multiplication tables they had learned. Pupils at all stages were able to interpret information displayed in graphs. However, they had insufficient opportunity to use computers to organise and display information. There were some weaknesses in pupils' skills in *problem solving and enquiry*. While most could tackle problems with confidence, they were not sufficiently aware of the range of strategies they could use to solve them. All pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in *information handling, number, money and measurement, and shape, position and movement*.

Science

The overall quality of attainment in science was good. Pupils performed well in their classwork and they had good knowledge of the topic they were currently studying. In general, however, they had insufficient knowledge of topics they had previously studied. All pupils were actively involved in carrying out experiments and were developing good skills of observation and recording. Pupils at the upper stages were able to draw appropriate conclusions from the experiments they had carried out.

Information and communications technology

The following were notable features of pupils' proficiency in information and communications technology (ICT).

- Pupils at the upper stages were confident in using computers to research information.
- In English language most pupils made good use of word processing to produce pieces of writing.
- Pupils at the early stages used simple programmes to consolidate reading and number skills.

4. How good is the curriculum?

The school provided a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils learned French from P6 onwards.

English language	The programme for English language was good overall. Although it gave good attention to most aspects of listening, talking, reading and writing, teachers had insufficient common understanding of the detail required in the programme. The school had recognised the need to improve the writing programme to provide opportunities for older pupils to write at length.
Mathematics	The programme for mathematics was good overall. It gave good attention to key aspects, including shape, position and movement and the development of pupils' skills in mental calculation. It did not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to use computers for information handling. The programme was being developed to teach pupils a range of strategies for problem solving.
Science	The programme for science was good. It gave appropriate emphasis to key aspects of scientific knowledge and to the development of pupils' skills of observation, recording and drawing conclusions.
Environmental Studies	The programme for environmental studies was fair. It did not provide sufficient coverage of history and contemporary issues. The school had recognised the need to improve the programme to provide opportunities

for pupils to build systematically on their prior knowledge and skills.

5. How good is the learning and teaching?

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. All of the lessons seen were good. Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

Some features of learning and teaching were as follows.

- Teachers planned their work conscientiously, but their plans did not set out sufficiently clearly what pupils were expected to learn.
- They made good use of a variety of teaching methods including direct teaching to the whole class, groups and individuals. Homework was set regularly in mathematics and English language to extend pupils' learning.
- Pupils were well motivated and enthusiastic in their lessons. They co-operated very well with each other.
- Teachers tried to ensure that the needs of all pupils were being met. Although the pace of learning was generally appropriate, some tasks for pupils at the upper stages lacked sufficient challenge.
- Teachers assessed pupils' progress effectively in English language and mathematics. They used National Tests to confirm their judgements of pupils' attainment. Assessment in science was not well developed.

6. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare The school had very good arrangements to ensure that pupils' care and welfare was attended to. Very good procedures were in place for child protection and for dealing with incidents where pupils' health might be at

risk. Staff knew their pupils very well as individuals and had a caring approach to their welfare. The school successfully promoted good relationships and positive behaviour.

Personal and social development

Very good attention was paid to pupils' personal and social development through classroom experiences and visits outside school. The programme for personal and social development provided good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles and personal safety.

Support for learning

Overall, there were weaknesses in the education authority's arrangements to assist the school in supporting pupils who were experiencing learning difficulties. Although a visiting teacher of learning support had assessed some pupils, appropriate individualised educational programmes had not been put in place. Teachers and the classroom assistant provided good support to those children who did not have significant learning difficulties.

The headteacher and the education authority were carrying out appropriate statutory procedures to open a Record of Needs for one pupil.

7. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher provided good leadership to the school. She was a hard-working, experienced teacher who had a strong commitment to the school and her pupils. She had developed and maintained the school's positive, caring atmosphere. She knew the strengths of her staff and had placed a good emphasis on developing strong teamwork. However, teaching programmes and forward planning had not been sufficiently developed.

The school aims were clear and appropriate. They had recently been updated. There were a good number of policy statements on aspects of the life of the school.

Staff development and review

Staff had participated in a range of development activities which were generally well linked to the school development plan. Teachers had undertaken appropriate training in ICT. They had also had their work reviewed as part of the education authority's scheme for staff development and review.

School development planning

The school had written a report which provided a clear audit of its strengths and development needs. From this a good development plan had been produced. The action plans identified appropriate priorities for improvement. The criteria against which the success of the plans could be measured were not specified sufficiently clearly. The school had made fair progress towards implementing the previous plan.

Approaches to improving quality

The school had begun to use performance indicators as part of the development planning process. The headteacher discussed forward plans and monitored teaching and learning informally in the classroom. She had identified the need to improve teachers' planning and teaching programmes. However, the school's arrangements for quality assurance had some important weaknesses. There were no systematic approaches to evaluating the overall quality of the school's work.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

Cabrach Primary School provided a good quality of education. Pupils were well cared for and were making good progress in their work. The quality of teaching was good. The school now needed to continue to improve attainment by developing clearer procedures for planning

- Key strengths**
- to ensure that teachers clearly stated what they expected pupils to learn.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils.
 - The very good accommodation and resources.
 - The commitment of teaching and ancillary staff to the school.
 - The high quality of pastoral care.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- To improve attainment further, the school should improve the programmes in English language, mathematics and environmental studies.
- The school should develop a coherent system of planning linked to programmes of study which identify what pupils are expected to learn.
- Staff should ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged and that the pace of learning is appropriate.
- Visiting learning support staff and class teachers should work together to provide individualised educational programmes for those pupils who require them.
- The school should improve its procedures for quality assurance.
- Opportunities should be provided for regular religious observance.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations. The school and education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main points for action in the report and to share that plan with parents.

Morag Gunion
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division

9 October 2001

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Provision of staff, their qualifications and experience
- Provision of materials and equipment
- The school's management of devolved finances
- Quality of pastoral care
- Personal and social development

We judged the following to be *good*

- The school's ethos
- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- The structure of the curriculum
- Quality of courses or programmes
- Quality of the teaching process
- Quality of pupils' learning
- Matching the teaching process to pupils' needs and experience
- Using assessment to guide the teaching process
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- The school development plan
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Quality of teachers' planning
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work
- Implementing the school development plan

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Quality of lessons observed

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was good in 100% of cases. There were no very good, fair or unsatisfactory lessons.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Educational Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the office at the address below or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our web site: www.scotland.gov.uk/hmis.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to George Gray, Acting HMCI whose address is given below. If you are unhappy with the response, you will be told in writing what further steps you may take.

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