

**Ferintosh Primary School
The Highland Council**

18 December 2001

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Ferintosh Primary School The Highland Council

1. Introduction

Ferintosh Primary School was inspected in October 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 social subjects.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to a questionnaire issued to all parents. A member of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA).

2. The school

The school serves the rural district of Ferintosh in Ross and Cromarty. At the time of the inspection the roll was 34.

Parents' views

Most parents responded to the questionnaire and were very happy with the work of the school.

Almost all thought that:

- their children enjoyed school, were encouraged to work to the best of their abilities and were well known as individuals;
- they received regular and accurate reports about their children's progress and that the school would respond very well to any concerns they might have;
- they were content with the part they were asked to play in their children's education; and
- the school was very well led and had a very good reputation in the community.

Ethos

The school's ethos was very good. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming. Staff were highly committed to the school and set appropriately high expectations for pupils' behaviour and performance. They made effective use of praise to reward effort and good behaviour. Pupils took a pride in their school and were consistently polite and friendly towards adults. Extra-curricular activities contributed significantly to the development of pupils' wider interests. Religious observance took place regularly. Attendance was well above national levels.

School and community

The school had established very good links with parents, other schools and the wider community. Notable features included:

- detailed reports to parents and regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress;
- a very supportive School Board and very strong support from the wider community;

- very good participation in local sporting competitions;
- a very good range of visits to places of historical and educational interest;
- very informative letters to parents; and
- very good opportunities for parents to see and discuss the work of the school.

Accommodation

The quality of the accommodation and facilities was fair overall. Classrooms were bright and well decorated. Office space and staff facilities were cramped. External walls and windows had been poorly maintained. The perimeter fence was not stockproof. Areas of the grassed and wooded playground could not be adequately supervised. The tarred playground next to the school was subject to flooding and deposits of mud. Arrangements for supervision of younger children awaiting transport at the end of the school day required to be reviewed. The school security system was not fully effective.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed. Most visiting teachers and instructors provided valuable specialist teaching. Ancillary staff made very helpful contributions to the life of the school. The school had a generally good range of modern resources, including some equipment for information and communications technology (ICT). Resources were very well-organised and easily accessed. The headteacher managed finances very effectively. Spending decisions were closely linked to priorities in the development plan and to improving provision.

3. How well are pupils performing?

English language	The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Almost all pupils performed well in most aspects of their coursework. Almost all spoke confidently. They listened carefully and responded very well to stories and poems which they had read and heard. Most were keen readers and could find information readily. The quality of their writing was fair with too many weaknesses in grammar, spelling and presentation. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels in <i>listening, talking</i> and <i>reading</i> , and the majority attained them in <i>writing</i> .
Mathematics	The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. At all stages most pupils were performing well in their course work and tasks were generally well chosen to meet pupils' needs. Most were developing good skills in performing mental calculations but for some the pace was too slow. Although pupils worked well with graphs, they had not used computers to display or organise information. At the early stages they had a good understanding of the features of different shapes. Most pupils had attained national levels in <i>information handling, number, money and measurement</i> and <i>shape, position and movement</i> . In <i>problem solving and enquiry</i> the majority of pupils could tackle simple exercises. They had insufficient knowledge of strategies for solving more difficult problems.
Social subjects	The quality of attainment overall in social subjects was fair. In <i>history</i> pupils' knowledge was too general and they had insufficient appreciation of key dates and achievements. In <i>geography</i> almost all pupils had a good knowledge of local features but they had difficulty in naming and locating major continents and countries. In <i>people and society</i> pupils had a good understanding of some current world issues.

4. How good is the curriculum?

The school's good curriculum was broad and balanced and included opportunities for pupils to study French.

English language

The programme for English language was good overall. Listening, talking and reading were well represented as a result of recent improvements. Pupils at the upper stages required further opportunities to read more challenging texts. More emphasis needed to be given to extended writing at all stages.

Mathematics

The mathematics programme was good. Recent improvements to the programme had strengthened pupils' performance in mental calculations and their understanding of number. However, pupils needed further opportunities to develop awareness of a range of strategies for solving problems and to use computers for handling information.

Social subjects

The programme for social subjects within environmental studies was fair. It placed good emphasis on the development of pupils' investigative skills but not enough attention was given to key aspects of history and geography.

Environmental Studies

The programme for environmental studies was good overall. Programmes in science and technology were well-developed. The school's ICT programme was at an early stage of development.

5. How good is learning and teaching?

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

- Teachers jointly planned their work on a regular basis. Their plans needed to show more clearly the approaches and resources to be used.
- Teachers provided clear explanations and used questioning very well.
- Pupils were generally very conscientious and worked well on the tasks set. They had good opportunities to exercise independence within well-organised classroom routines.
- In almost all classes teachers effectively matched learning activities to pupils' needs.
- Assessment and recording procedures were well developed. There was a good system for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers used National Tests to confirm their judgements of pupils' attainment.

6. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare	Staff provided very good support for pupils' care and welfare. Very good arrangements were in place for child protection and for dealing with incidents where pupils' health might be at risk. The school successfully promoted good relationships and positive behaviour.
Personal and social development	Teachers encouraged pupils to be supportive of one another and to respond positively to the community in which they lived. Staff fostered pupils' personal and social development through giving them various responsibilities. Pupils had good opportunities to take part in residential trips and a very broad range of extra-curricular activities. The health education programme gave good attention to aspects of healthy eating, personal safety and physical, emotional and social health.

Support for learning The overall quality of support for learning was fair. Class teachers and the classroom assistant gave good support. The learning support teacher provided individualised educational programmes for pupils who needed extra support, but the programmes did not show clearly enough what pupils had to learn. Insufficient evaluation was made of pupils' progress in order to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. There were some opportunities for the learning support teacher to consult with class teachers but these should be developed further.

7. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership In her time in post the headteacher had provided the school with very good leadership. She had introduced a wide range of important and necessary improvements in programmes of work, pupils' attainment, behaviour and attitude to school. She had developed a strong team spirit and was successfully promoting an ethos of high achievement throughout the school. She had ensured that development tasks were carried out effectively and at a good pace. Through good quality development planning and consultation with all staff, pupils and parents she had established a very clear sense of direction for the school.

The school's aims were appropriately focused on raising attainment. They set out an effective framework for planning and evaluating the work of the school. There was a good range of appropriate policies.

Staff development and review All staff had undertaken a good range of staff development activities. They successfully used their training to enhance pupils' experiences and to improve the work of the school. The work of the headteacher and her colleague had been formally reviewed.

School development planning The very good school development plan set out the school's priorities clearly. There was a very good focus on improving programmes and on raising attainment.

The audit section carefully evaluated all the key aspects of the school's work. Very good progress had been made in addressing the priorities in the plan.

Approaches to improving quality

The school's arrangements for quality assurance were very good. The headteacher regularly visited classes to monitor learning and teaching, and provided detailed feedback. She and her staff worked well together to evaluate all aspects of the school's provision through the effective use of national performance indicators.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided a good standard of education. The headteacher had taken effective steps to improve the school's work in a number of key areas. The school should continue to raise attainment, including the improvement of provision for pupils with learning difficulties. The headteacher's commitment to improvement formed a sound basis for strengthening the quality of education in the school.

Key strengths

- The ethos throughout the school.
- The links with parents, the School Board and the wider community.
- The teaching and learning in some classes.
- The procedures for quality assurance and staff development and review.
- The development plan.
- The leadership of the headteacher.

Main points for action

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

- Address aspects of accommodation which affect pupils' health and safety.
- Improve effectiveness of support for pupils with learning difficulties.
- Improve the programmes in English language, mathematics and social subjects.
- Revise approaches to planning to show more clearly how teachers' plans are to be implemented and what resources are to be used.

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.

D MacQuarrie
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division

18 December 2001

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- The school's ethos
- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- Provision of staff
- The school's management of devolved finances
- Quality of the teaching process
- Quality of pupils' learning
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work
- The school development plan
- Implementing the school development plan

We judged the following to be *good*

- Provision of materials and equipment
- The structure of the curriculum
- Quality of courses or programmes
- Quality of teachers' planning
- Matching the teaching process to pupils' needs and experience
- Using assessment to guide the teaching process
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Effectiveness of the learning support

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 very good in 55% of cases, good in 33%, and fair in 12%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, 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/hmie

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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