

**St Gerardine Primary School
and Nursery Classes
Lossiemouth
The Moray Council**

22 January 2002

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**Inspection of Standards and Quality in
St Gerardine Primary School and
Nursery Classes
Lossiemouth
The Moray Council**

1. Introduction

St Gerardine Primary School and its nursery classes were inspected in October 2001 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery 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 technology within environmental studies.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents. A member of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

2. The school

The school serves part of the Seatown and Branderburgh areas of Lossiemouth. At the time of the inspection the roll was 268 including 48 children in the nursery.

Parents' views

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very pleased with the work of the school and the nursery classes.

Almost all thought that:

- their children enjoyed school and were encouraged to work to the best of their ability;
- staff managed behaviour well and treated children fairly;
- school reports and parents' evenings were helpful and informative;
- they were consulted on decisions which affected their children and the school was responsive to their concerns; and
- the school was well led.

Most parents thought that their children found school stimulating and challenging, and that the school had a good reputation in the community.

Ethos

The school's ethos was very positive. All staff worked successfully to create a happy and secure learning environment. Relationships between pupils and staff, and standards of behaviour in classes, were very good. Staff used praise effectively. They were working hard to develop an ethos of achievement. Regular assemblies provided good opportunities for celebrating achievement and religious observance. Attendance was above national levels.

School and community

The school had established useful links with parents, other schools, educational support services and the wider community.

Positive features included:

- very good communication to parents through regular newsletters and an informative school handbook;
- effective procedures to introduce new pupils into nursery classes and P1;
- useful advice on supporting pupils with their homework;
- an active School Board and parent-teacher association (PTA); and
- very good support from parent helpers for a range of school activities.

Accommodation

Overall the quality of accommodation was very good. Classrooms were spacious and pupils' work was attractively displayed. The nursery classes had access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Pupils made regular use of a very well organised library and computer suite.

Staffing and resources

The school was very well staffed by teachers with a wide range of experience. Classroom assistants were very well deployed to provide effective support for staff and pupils. Ancillary staff made valued and effective contributions to the work of the school.

The school had a very good supply of resources. The headteacher managed devolved finances very well. She had used funds effectively to provide modern teaching resources and to enhance staffing levels.

3. How well are pupils performing?

Nursery

Children settled quickly into the nursery and were making very good progress in the key aspects of the

curriculum. They co-operated very well with one another and listened carefully to instructions from adults.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Throughout the school pupils were making good progress in their coursework. At all stages pupils listened attentively and answered questions well. Almost all read fluently from familiar texts and most read for enjoyment. However, in the middle and upper stages their skills in discussing what they had read were insufficiently developed. Most pupils at all stages wrote well for a variety of purposes. The standard of presentation of written work was consistently high. Pupils used their word processing skills to good effect. Almost all at the early stages, and most at the middle and upper stages, were attaining appropriate national levels in *listening, talking* and *reading*. The majority attained these levels in *writing*.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Almost all pupils performed very well on their coursework. The pace of progress for most was very good, and pupils responded well to the high expectations set by their teachers. They were benefiting from regular practice in mental arithmetic, and most could respond quickly and accurately to questions asked. Throughout the school most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels of attainment in *information handling, number, money and measurement* and *shape, position and movement*. Many pupils at the early and upper stages were exceeding these levels and making very good progress. In *problem-solving and enquiry* pupils had a good knowledge of the range of strategies to use in tackling problems. Older pupils were beginning to develop an understanding of how to use their knowledge of mathematics to solve problems in real-life situations.

Technology

The overall quality of attainment in technology was fair. Most pupils performed well in class but generally their coursework did not build on what they had done

previously. At P1 and P2 pupils worked well together on construction tasks. Most pupils in P4/P5 were able to use sketches effectively when planning their designs. In P6 and P6/P7 almost all pupils showed creativity in their approaches to design solutions. However, they had infrequent opportunities to tackle problems and create a range of design solutions. They had limited experience of evaluating their work.

4. How good is the curriculum?

In order to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum the headteacher kept teachers' weekly plans under close review. Pupils at P6 and P7 had good opportunities to learn French. The arrangement of teaching groups according to ability in mathematics at the upper stages helped to ensure that almost all pupils made very good progress.

Nursery

The overall quality of the curriculum in the nursery classes was very good. Staff provided a wide range of valuable activities to develop children's abilities in listening, talking, reading and writing. Children were encouraged to develop their curiosity and their knowledge of aspects of early mathematics.

English language

The programme for English language was good. In the upper stages there were not sufficient opportunities for pupils to study a wide variety of texts. Staff had effectively improved the writing programme.

Mathematics

The overall quality of the programme in mathematics was very good. It placed an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' skills in mental arithmetic, and in helping pupils to use a range of strategies to solve problems through mathematics.

Technology

The overall quality of the programme for technology was fair. It had yet to be fully developed to ensure that the work provided for pupils at each stage built on previously acquired knowledge and skills.

Environmental studies

The programme in environmental studies was good. Topics in history, geography, and science provided pupils with a good range of relevant experiences and practical activities. The school was taking action to improve the programme in technology.

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. There were no major weaknesses in any lessons. Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

- Staff in the nursery classes had developed effective arrangements for planning, assessing and recording children's progress. They had very good relationships with the children and interacted very effectively with them to develop their understanding and skills. Children were actively involved in their play and co-operated very well with one another.
- At the primary stages teachers generally planned their work well. They set homework on a regular basis and reinforced and consolidated pupils' knowledge and understanding to good effect.
- The direct teaching in mathematics at P6 and P7 was of a very high quality. In English language and technology teachers generally gave clear and helpful explanations.

- Pupils were well motivated. Most made good progress and almost all responded positively to the encouragement and praise given by teachers. They participated enthusiastically in practical activities in technology lessons.
- Teachers generally matched tasks well to most pupils' needs.
- Teachers assessed pupils' progress in English language and mathematics very effectively, using National Tests to confirm their judgements. Although the school had yet to develop a system for assessing and recording pupils' progress in technology, teachers offered pupils good feedback on their work.

6. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare	The school had very good arrangements for dealing with situations where pupils' health might be at risk, including clear anti-bullying and child protection policies. The school successfully promoted positive behaviour and encouraged pupils to treat one another with respect.
Personal and social development	Staff in the nursery classes used praise very effectively to develop children's self-esteem. They encouraged children to take turns and to show consideration for others. In primary classes, teachers provided a very good range of appropriate activities to encourage pupils' personal and social development. Pupils had regular opportunities to take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. In P7 there was a strong focus on issues relating to good citizenship, including anti-racism. The good health education programme included relevant aspects of personal safety, healthy lifestyles and personal relationships.

Support for learning

The overall quality of support for learning was good.

Features of this provision included the following:

- regular consultation between the support for learning teacher, the headteacher and class teachers;
- generally effective individual and group teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs; and
- very good individualised educational programmes which contained clear targets and enabled pupils' progress to be monitored effectively.

External agencies provided helpful advice on aspects of meeting pupils' needs. Appropriate arrangements were in place for reviewing and updating Records of Needs.

7. How well is the school managed?**Overall management and leadership**

The headteacher provided very effective leadership. She had created a very positive school ethos, promoted effective teamwork and established very good relationships with pupils, parents and staff. She had introduced a number of valuable initiatives to change aspects of school practice and improve attainment. She had involved staff in developing and agreeing practical advice on important areas of their work. The acting depute headteacher supported both the headteacher and staff very well. Her teaching was a model of very good practice.

The school's aims were clear and appropriate. They had been shared with parents and were used well in development planning. The school had a good range of policies which supported staff in their work.

Staff development and review	Staff had recently begun to take part in useful staff development activities which were well linked to the school development plan. The work of all teaching staff had been reviewed within the education authority's scheme for staff development and review.
School development planning	The school had produced a very good development plan which identified appropriate priorities. Agreed points for action included a strong focus on developing programmes of work, improving the quality of learning and teaching, and raising attainment. The school had made very good progress in implementing its priorities.
Approaches to improving quality	The school's procedures for self-evaluation were very good. Staff had begun to use national performance indicators to review aspects of the school's performance. The headteacher undertook a valuable range of activities to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of learning and teaching. She reviewed teachers' forward plans, sampled pupils' work and regularly visited classes to monitor learning and teaching. The school had produced an accurate report on the standards and quality of its provision.

8. How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided a generally good quality of education. The headteacher and staff demonstrated a clear commitment to continuous improvement and were effectively taking forward the necessary developments.

Key strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ethos of the school, including staff relationships with pupils. • The quality of the curriculum in the nursery. • The overall quality of attainment in mathematics.
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- The politeness, good behaviour and motivation of pupils.
- The high quality of direct teaching at P6 and P7.
- The partnership between the school and parents.
- The commitment of the headteacher and the acting depute headteacher.
- The arrangements for quality assurance and school development planning.

Main points for action

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

- The school should continue with its efforts to raise attainment.
- The school should improve the programme and assessment of pupils' attainment in technology.

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.

Anne Park
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Northern Division

22 January 2002

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 accommodation and facilities
- Provision of staff
- Provision of materials and equipment
- The school's management of devolved finances
- The structure of the curriculum
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- Effectiveness of promoted staff
- 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*

- Quality of courses or programmes
- Quality of teachers' planning
- 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
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *fair*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

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 39% of cases, good in 40% and fair in 21%. 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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