

Rothes Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Moray Council
10 February 2009

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school[1]. 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[2] 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. 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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[1] The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

[2] 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

Rothes Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Rothes and the surrounding rural area. The inspection was carried out in November 2008 at which time the roll was 132, including 21 children in the nursery. Pupils' attendance was above the national average in 2006/2007.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The wide range of stimulating learning experiences in the nursery and in the early stages of the primary school.
- Children's skills in using information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance their learning.
- Courteous and well-behaved children.
- Positive interactions between staff and children.

3. Example of good practice

- The initiative 'First Steps to School'. This introduces parents to children's nursery experiences and allows them to meet with the range of agency representatives working to support children's learning.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery children receive high quality learning experiences. They are motivated and happy in their learning. They cooperate well and are helpful to each other. They are making very good progress in developing their early reading and writing. They enjoy exploring early writing and listening to stories. Most children can identify their own name in print and can work with numbers to ten and above. Most can also weigh and measure effectively as part of their play activities.

Overall, children in the primary stages are making good progress in listening, talking, reading and writing. Most children achieve appropriate national levels in listening, talking and reading and the majority do so in writing. Children are developing their language skills through a range of stimulating activities. Most children read fluently from reading books and novels and discuss plots and characters knowledgeably. Children write for a variety of purposes but not at sufficient length. Across the stages the standard of children's written presentation is very high. Children are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. Most reach appropriate national levels of attainment. At the middle and upper stages children can interpret data from charts and graphs but do not have enough experience in doing mental calculations. At P1, children are developing their mathematical skills in a range of practical activities. In too many lessons in the middle and upper stages, children are not sufficiently challenged to build on previous mathematical progress. Children are motivated and eager to learn. At P1, children have good opportunities to make choices and learn through play. All children are achieving new skills, for example through taking part in clubs, performances, sports, excursions and residential trips.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children in the nursery experience a broad and stimulating curriculum. They learn well through a variety of play activities which develop their wider achievements. Those at the primary stages benefit from a broad curriculum which includes citizenship, enterprise activities and international education, in line with advice in the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Visiting staff contribute effectively to widen children's learning experiences. All children receive two hours of physical education per week. Children are learning to use effectively their ICT skills through a range of literacy projects. For example, children are confident in using computers to create images and text, send e-mails, and engage with the Internet to research topic work.

Staff in the nursery meet children's needs very well. They are caring and supportive towards children and their families. They know

individual children well and adapt activities well to meet their individual needs. Staff interact very well with children and extend effectively their learning. At the primary stages, teachers give clear explanations and regular homework. They share the purposes of lessons with children. Teachers adapt learning to meet the needs of most children. Learning assistants make valuable contributions to enhance children's learning. Children with additional support needs, including those with English as an additional language, are effectively supported. In a small, but significant number of lessons, children do not experience enough challenge to enable them to make progress in line with their potential.

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

The nursery and primary staff work well together to help ensure that children are confident when moving into P1. Staff also work very effectively with support services, including a home link worker, to support individual children. Links with the local community provide successful learning opportunities for all. For example, the nursery visited a fire station and children in P7 develop their skills in teamwork through taking part in the Gordonstoun School Challenge. The school communicates well with the parents through newsletters, parent meetings and informative progress reports. Volunteers help with after-school clubs. Parents support the school through the Rothes School Association. Arrangements for children to move to Speyside High School are effective.

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

As part of a whole school science project, children built a nursery garden for growing their own vegetables. Across the school, children gain in confidence from taking part in school committees. At P7, pupils behave very responsibly and coach younger children. The headteacher is helping the pupil council to develop aims and values to

be shared with the whole school and parents. The staff readily engage in staff development and give of their free time to run clubs and events to improve children's experience. Staff and children raise money for charity through sales and fun runs. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning appropriately. Staff do not yet make effective use of information on children's progress to plan children's next steps in learning.

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

The school is welcoming and children have very good relationships with their teachers. Children behave well and care for each other. Teachers expect them to work hard and almost all children do so. Children in the early years are buddies for the nursery children, while those at P7 help in the nursery. Children's achievements are displayed throughout the school and celebrated at weekly assemblies. The whole school visits the local church to celebrate religious festivals. The school chaplain contributes to religious and moral education through regular class visits. The school is beginning to develop a whole-school approach to health promotion. Staff follow appropriate child protection and anti-racist procedures.

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

The headteacher has an appropriate overall vision for the school. She needs to communicate clearer guidance to staff on the development of mathematics. The principal teacher has been instrumental in the development of a writing policy, and together with the headteacher, has improved the teaching and learning of writing. Teachers are enthusiastic about recently introduced ways of improving their teaching by concentrating on how children learn. Staff contribute well to plans to improve the school and are beginning to use self-evaluation more effectively. Ensuring greater consistency in the pace and challenge of lessons will improve pupils' performance. With support from the local authority, the school is capable of improving further.

9. 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.

- Continue to raise attainment in mathematics and writing.
- Increase pace and challenge in children's learning.
- Further develop the school's approach to self-evaluation.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement, which has been addressed. In addition, a recommendation from a previous inspection has been overtaken.

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 Rothes Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	**very good**
Children's experiences	**very good**
Meeting learning needs	**very good**

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery class.

The curriculum	**good**
Improvement through self-evaluation	**satisfactory**

Managing Inspector: Pat May
10 February 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

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