



**Kemnay Academy  
Inverurie  
Aberdeenshire Council  
2 June 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. We describe how young people 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 young people. We also comment on how well staff and young people 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 young people 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 and details about young people’s examination performance. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school and a report on the learning community surrounding 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**

Kemnay Academy is a non-denominational school which serves the town of Kemnay and surrounding rural area. The roll was 615 when the inspection was carried out in March 2009. Young people's attendance was above the national average in 2007.

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

- The leadership of the headteacher and senior management team.
- The strong links with external agencies which support learners' experiences.
- High quality relationships between staff and young people.
- The consistently high quality of young people's attainment and achievement.
- The consistent and outstanding level of attainment in art and design.

## **3. Examples of good practice**

- Involvement of young people from P7 through to S1/S2 in choosing and designing courses.
- S1/S2 additionally supported curriculum project which enables all young people to have access to the curriculum.
- Effective inter-agency working through the Community School Network (CSN) which is leading to positive outcomes for vulnerable young people.

## **4. How well do young people learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

Young people are happy and enjoy school. Almost all are well motivated and keen to learn. They have very positive relationships with teachers and get on well with each other. They behave very well in class and across the school. In the best lessons the activities and learning approaches provided by teachers help young people to work independently and to take responsibility for their learning. When teachers provide them with detailed feedback on how to improve their learning, young people are more confident about what they can do to improve.

Young people achieve across a wide range of contexts. At all stages they volunteer, help others and develop a broad range of sporting, musical, personal and life skills. They deal with progressively more challenging situations as they move through the school. In particular, young people gained personal success recently by taking part in the local 'Rock Challenge' and the 'Diced Cap' enterprise projects. Significant numbers of young people are involved in musical activities. Some actively engage in Eco, charities, and library committees and international expeditions. By taking part in these activities young people gain confidence, self-esteem and important knowledge relevant to their lives beyond school.

By the end of S2, the majority of young people achieve national levels of attainment in reading, writing, listening and talking. In mathematics, the majority achieve or exceed these levels. In S4, the number of young people achieving at least five awards at Credit level is above the national average. Results in national examinations for young people in S5 and S6 are overall well above the national average. In some departments such as art and design, business education, technology and philosophy, young people achieve consistently high results in their course work. Young people with additional support needs are making very good progress in their learning. Almost all young people leave school for university, college or employment.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

The curriculum is very well designed and supports the learning needs of almost all young people. Commendably, young people have been involved in choosing and designing courses. This process begins in P7 and continues into S1/S2. These courses are developing useful life skills in young people and promote creativity and enterprise. From S3 to S6, the school provides a growing range of courses and programmes to suit a variety of learning needs and career aspirations. Strong links with Banff and Buchan College are helping young people to prepare for work. Arrangements for moving from P7 to S1 are very well organised and help young people experience a welcoming and well supported start to secondary school. At all stages, young people are well prepared for leaving school and starting work. Young people have a very good awareness of what it means to be healthy. They have many opportunities to be involved in sporting activities out of class time. However, they do not yet experience two hours of physical education each week as part of the formal curriculum. The school has plans to move towards providing all young people with this entitlement.

In most lessons, teachers use a range of well-chosen tasks, activities and resources to stimulate and challenge young people. In some lessons, questioning is used well to extend their thinking. Most teachers use information and communications technology (ICT) well to make lessons interesting. Young people, however, are given few opportunities to use ICT independently to develop their own learning. The school has been very successful in identifying and meeting the needs of young people, including those with additional needs. Support for learning staff provide very effective extra help for young people in classes and small groups. The additionally supported curriculum project provides well-designed activities from across a number of subject areas for a group of young people in S1/S2 with additional support needs. These activities are meeting their needs well and developing their confidence. Those young people who need them have very well-designed individualised educational programmes or learning plans which set out clear targets, which are shared with all staff. This approach is effective in helping these young people to

make very good progress in their learning.

## **5. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?**

The headteacher and staff have very good relationships with parents and associated primary schools. The Parent Council supports the school well. For example, it has worked well with staff and young people in making improvements to school transport. Almost all parents are happy with the school and are kept well informed about their children's progress. A few parents feel the school could take their views into account more. The school engages imaginatively with a number of external partners such as community learning and development providers, local businesses and other organisations. The very effective joint assessment and planning procedures which operate within the CSN meet the needs of young people very well, and make a positive contribution to their achievement. The school values its partners, makes them welcome and treats them with respect.

## **6. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?**

Staff contribute a great deal to the life and work of the school. They organise various clubs for young people and involve them in regular fundraising activities. All teaching staff are involved in a wide range of working groups and committees. They work well in teams and are developing approaches to sharing good practice. Young people are beginning to play an important part in improving the school. The pupil councils have led the way in changing the way the school celebrates achievement, and in improving the conditions on the school buses. Overall however, young people need more of a say in improving the school, including how they learn. The school has a number of well-established processes for reviewing its performance. These processes have given senior managers and teachers a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, not all staff use them consistently to improve the quality of learning and teaching and monitor young people's progress. All staff

need to work together to continue to improve young people's learning experiences across the school.

## **7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?**

Kemnay Academy is very welcoming and provides a high standard of care. Young people respond well to the staff's high expectations of their learning and behaviour. In a few departments, staff could have higher expectations of what pupils can do, and involve them more in setting their own targets. Senior managers and pupil support staff closely monitor attendance and behaviour. They identify and follow up identified causes for concern very quickly. Young people's wider achievements are recognised through prominent corridor displays, at assemblies and in the local press. The school actively promotes healthy living. The school lunches are popular and encourage young people to make healthy choices. The school successfully promotes equality, fairness, and understanding of important global issues, through a range of courses and events. There are regular religious services. The school has appropriate arrangements for dealing with complaints.

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

The headteacher provides very effective leadership for the school. He is very well thought of amongst staff, young people, and the wider community. He is ably supported by his senior managers who carry out their remits well. They need to work more closely with departments to help them deliver on school and departmental targets. Many teachers take on leadership roles and are making significant contributions to improving the school. A few departments have planned projects which enable young people to work across subject areas. All staff regularly discuss and plan how to develop the national initiative Curriculum for Excellence.

## **9. What happens next?**

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the

school, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the school's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its schools.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to improve arrangements for evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and monitoring young people's progress.
- Provide better opportunities for young people to be involved in reviewing and making decisions about their learning.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *How good is our school?*. 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 are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Kemnay Academy.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>very good</b>

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>very good</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>good</b>

**HM Inspector:** Laura Welford

2 June 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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