



**Lumsden School
Huntly
Aberdeenshire Council
5 May 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. 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 parents² 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.

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

Lumsden School is a non-denominational school. It serves the village of Lumsden and the surrounding area. The roll was 39 when the inspection was carried out in March 2009. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. The school has experienced recent changes in leadership. The acting headteacher is also the headteacher of Towie School.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, confident and friendly children who work well together on tasks.
- The care and concern for children shown by all staff and their commitment to improving children's learning.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most children are keen to take part in their learning. Most feel safe, nurtured, included and respected. They are developing their social, physical and cultural skills well through a range of interesting activities organised with other local schools. These include hill walking, Scottish country dancing, a chess tournament, mathematics games and "street jammin'" sessions. The school has been commended by the local authority for its health promotion activities. Children in P6 and P7 develop their self-confidence and social skills effectively through taking part in popular residential trips. Children in P7 are learning to work together through organising and funding a trip of their choice. Those in P4 to P7 help younger children experience success in their learning and they have many creative ideas. In the P4 to P7 class, children have produced a helpful interactive bible based on their religious and moral education topic. Most children work well together in groups. They are keen to express their views and share ideas but do not always achieve success in their learning. Across the school, children do not yet have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their learning in class and to help make the school better. Children are proud of their personal and wider achievements and are eager to celebrate these at assemblies. They are not making sufficient progress from their earlier levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, their progress in these

areas is weak. However, there are encouraging signs that their literacy and numeracy skills are beginning to improve. Most children listen attentively in class discussions and talk confidently about their interests. In the P4 to P7 class, some children find it hard to listen and talk in groups. Across the school, most children enjoy reading for pleasure. Children, particularly at the upper stages, are not involved enough in selecting books which reflect their interests and encourage them to read more. The standard of children's writing is not high enough. Children do not write enough at length. Across the school, a majority of children are accurate in written number and measurement activities. They are less confident in using strategies to carry out mental calculations. Children at P6 and P7 can identify shapes, draw lines of symmetry and measure angles confidently. At all stages, children are unsure how to solve mathematical problems.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff provide children with a satisfactory curriculum overall. They are at the very early stages of developing the curriculum in line with the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff are beginning to make more use of active learning to enhance children's experiences. They do this particularly well at the upper stages. The visiting teacher of music provides valuable learning opportunities for children. Children are not sufficiently well motivated by their experiences in learning German and information and communications technology (ICT) with visiting staff. Staff are not yet providing two hours of quality physical education each week for all pupils. Teachers are improving children's classroom experiences, particularly in mathematics, reading and writing. They need to help children understand more clearly the links in their learning across different aspects of the curriculum.

Teachers know children well but they do not plan tasks and activities that are sufficiently well matched to learners' needs. Their planning does not take full account of what children already know. There are important weaknesses in how children's learning needs are being addressed. The pace of learning is not consistently good enough to

enable all children to make enough progress. Activities in English language and mathematics are not sufficiently focused on what children need to learn in order to improve. As a result, by P7 children are not attaining appropriate national levels, particularly in mathematics. Most teachers give clear explanations. In a few examples of best practice, teachers ask children questions which challenge their thinking. This practice now needs to become consistent across all stages. Support staff provide caring and helpful assistance to children who require additional help with their learning. They are not always used effectively to ensure that the needs of all children are met. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the support given to children are not working well. At all stages, children are not always clear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers give children homework which motivates and helps them to learn.

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

Members of the community run a range of evening clubs, such as football, netball, bowling and Quest activities with the local church. These provide valuable support for children's learning. The Parent Council supports the school, for example, by donating funds for playground equipment. It is keen to develop further links. Staff have effective partnerships with a wide range of external organisations. These include the education authority's psychological and social work services. These partnerships have been successful in supporting a few children. Teachers provide helpful information to parents about children's progress through annual progress reports and meetings. Many parents think that the school does not seek and take enough account of their views. A significant number of parents are concerned about the lack of a permanent headteacher for the school. A few feel that the school does not communicate well with them or deal with complaints quickly enough. There are signs of recent improvement as the acting headteacher and staff are taking steps to improve these aspects. The school needs to find ways to encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's learning. Staff prepare children well

for their transfer from nursery to primary. Children are particularly well supported for their transfer from P7 to Alford Academy. The school has gained a UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award. The award shows the strong links that Lumsden School has with small rural schools in the Alford area.

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

Across the school, children are keen to take responsibilities. With the support of the Parent Council, they are raising funds for playground equipment and a climbing wall. Children from P3 to P7 are involved in the pupil council which has very recently re-formed. They need more support and guidance from staff in order to achieve greater success as a group. Recently, children at P4 to P7 have been encouraged to give their views about their work and personal targets. As a result, they now have a more interesting variety of homework experiences. Staff are keen to improve the school. Their work is leading to improvements in children's learning experiences. Staff are not yet using information about children's learning to track children's progress effectively.

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

Children, together with staff, make visitors feel welcome. They are polite, friendly and confident. Most are well motivated to learn. Children behave well in classes and around the school. They feel safe and increasingly valued but are not always sure that the school will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. Staff have very positive relationships with children. They are committed to the wellbeing and support of all children and have an appropriate awareness of child protection procedures. They do not have high enough expectations of what children can attain in their learning. Staff are successful in promoting equality and fairness by including all children in all school activities. Children's achievements are beginning to be celebrated widely around the school in displays and at assemblies. The school

has recently started a 'Good News' book to display positive comments and celebrate the achievements of children and staff. Children have regular, interesting opportunities for religious observance with the school chaplain.

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

The school has identified appropriate areas for school improvement but progress in making improvements has been too slow. Staff lack direction on how to improve children's attainment and wider achievements. They have not been given enough guidance on how to improve their planning and ensure a good pace to children's learning and progress. Staff are not involved enough in using self-evaluation to make improvements. Staff, parents and children have been well supported by the leadership of the recent acting headteachers. All are committed to improving the work of the school. The ethos of achievement in the school is improving. Staff are keen to lead new developments and contribute actively to the life of the school. The school needs significant support from the education authority to develop its capacity to improve further.

8. What happens next?

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the school has made.

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

- Raise children's attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Continue to involve children more actively in their learning.
- Develop the curriculum further, taking advice from *Curriculum for Excellence* to ensure that children make appropriate progress in their learning.
- Develop closer partnerships with parents and the local community.
- Use self-evaluation effectively to improve children's attainment and achievements, and fully meet their learning needs.

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 Lumsden School.

Improvements in performance	weak
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	weak

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

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

HM Inspector: June Graham

5 May 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