



**Echt School
and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council
17 February 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

Echt School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Echt and the surrounding areas. The roll was 50, including 29 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in December 2008. Pupils' attendance was above the national average in 2006/2007. The nursery class is the designated nursery for a number of local primary schools. Both class teachers joined the school this session.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The very good start to children's learning in the nursery class.
- Confident, polite children who enjoy learning.
- Effective partnerships with parents and the community.
- The success of staff in developing children's skills in information and communications technology (ICT).
- The positive steps being taken to provide interesting learning experiences.
- The care shown by the headteacher and all staff for children's wellbeing.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery are progressing well in all aspects of their learning. They are enthusiastic and successful learners. They choose activities confidently and, with support from parents and staff, set targets for their own learning. They enjoy listening to stories and are keen to talk about their activities. They are interested in early writing activities, such as writing cards and addressing envelopes. Children are developing a good understanding of directions and most can compare weights and decide if objects are heavy or light. They have made patterns using a wide variety of resources, including art activities, small toys and threading beads. They are learning to count and some recognise numerals. Children enjoy energetic play in the

hall and outdoors and are well supported in using ICT to extend their learning.

In the primary classes, over the last few years, the school has maintained high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Children read with understanding and are successfully encouraged to read for enjoyment. They write effectively for a variety of purposes, including producing interesting articles for their school magazine, *The Echt Tatler*. Across the school, children can collect and display information in graphs and tables. Most are accurate in oral and written number work. They confidently discuss how to solve problems. Children across the school are successfully developing their skills in using ICT. They are learning to be responsible members of their school community. All belong to one of four groups which contribute effectively to the life of the school. Children achieve success in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. They have used their skills in drama and music to plan and present performances for parents and the local community. Children take steps to help others by raising funds for charities and very recently organised a highly successful Christmas Fair.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Across the school, all staff are developing their knowledge of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff in the nursery class provide a variety of stimulating activities for children. They make good use of the local environment to develop children's understanding of the changing seasons and people who help them. In the primary classes, teachers are involving children in planning their own learning. Each child has recently identified a personal learning target. Staff plan relevant and stimulating projects which help children to make links between different aspects of their learning. For example, children in P5 to P7 are developing a variety of skills through interesting work organised in conjunction with the Forest Ranger service. They regularly visit local woodland and use their numeracy, literacy and science skills in improving their knowledge of environmental education. Teachers plan relevant contexts for number work. The programmes for writing and

for ICT are successfully helping children to achieve across the curriculum. Children in P1 and P2 have some good opportunities to learn through play and staff are planning to develop this further.

In the nursery class, tasks and activities are set at the right level for all children. Staff know children very well. They use their observations of children's play to plan activities which meet their learning needs effectively. In the primary classes, most tasks and activities are appropriately challenging. Teachers make sure that children know the purpose of lessons and help them to reflect on what they have learned. Children are increasingly becoming confident in commenting constructively on their own and others' work. Staff collaborate well to help children requiring additional support with their learning. The support for learning teacher helps groups and individuals and works with the P5/6/7 class to extend children's thinking skills. Support staff are skilled and provide valuable help to children and teachers.

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

Relationships between staff and parents are positive and productive. Parents are kept well informed of events in school and developments in the curriculum. They receive annual reports on their children's progress and high numbers attend parents' evenings. The recently formed Parent Council and the Parent, Teacher Community Association are very supportive of the school. Parents and members of the community come into school throughout the year to share their skills and interests with children. This has helped to motivate children and improve key aspects of their learning. The school also works well with other agencies to support children and families. Staff in the nursery have worked hard to establish effective partnerships with the local schools with which they are linked. All staff work effectively to ensure that children are very well supported to move from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Alford Academy.

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

Across the school, children are developing positive and responsible attitudes to themselves and others. They successfully take on a range of responsibilities including improving the healthy tuck shop and organising their library. They contribute to developing playground activities and have recently been involved in choosing activities for after-school clubs. Children put forward their views on a range of topics through the school council and feel that they have a voice in making the school better. Those at P7 are keenly looking forward to implementing their plans for a P7 social area. The quality of staff teamwork is strong and all staff work hard to improve the school. The headteacher makes sure the views of children and parents are taken into account when planning improvements. Staff support clubs and fundraising events to extend children's experiences. They are involving children more in evaluating their own learning.

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

The school is a very caring and supportive learning environment. There is a genuine sense of community throughout and staff and children treat one another with mutual respect and consideration. Staff know children well and are successful in meeting their social, physical and emotional needs. All show concern for children's wellbeing and know about the school's child protection policy and procedures. Children behave well and any incidences of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with unobtrusively and effectively. Children feel safe at school and are learning about healthy lifestyles. They are proud of their achievements which are celebrated at assemblies and through attractive displays. The school has appropriate arrangements for religious observance.

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

The headteacher is highly committed to the school and provides strong and supportive leadership. She has a clear understanding of what is important to the school community and has successfully shared this with staff. She has set a clear agenda for improvement which is based on ensuring relevant contexts for learning and encouraging children to take responsibility for their own learning. All staff support her in this. Teachers feel able to contribute their ideas and are beginning to take leadership roles in developing aspects of children's learning. The headteacher regularly visits classes and checks children's progress. The information gained is being used well by all staff to help children learn. Following the appointment of new teaching staff, the headteacher understands the need to involve all staff in evaluating the impact of their work as a team. The school is well placed to continue to improve further.

8. 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 develop opportunities for children to be active and independent learners.
- Continue to review and develop the curriculum in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation which had been addressed.

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 Echt School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	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	good

HM Inspector: Isabel Bolton
17 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