



**Elrick School  
and Nursery Class  
Westhill  
Aberdeenshire Council  
17 March 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school<sup>1</sup>. 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<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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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<sup>1</sup> The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

## **Contents**

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Example of good practice
4. How well do children learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
6. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

### **1. The school**

Elrick School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the Elrick area of Westhill. The roll was 403, including 59 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in January 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2006/2007.

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

- High quality care and education for children in the nursery class.
- The strong approaches to active learning in some classes across the school.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the headteacher and the teamwork by all the staff to improving the school.
- Motivated, enthusiastic and responsible children.
- Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enrich children's learning.

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

- The development of leadership for learning amongst staff and children.

## **4. How well do children learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

In the nursery class, children receive high quality learning experiences. They take part enthusiastically in a wide range of activities and are happy and motivated. They are making very good progress in developing their early reading and writing skills. Children listen well to each other and to adults. They are developing their vocabulary well and can discuss with confidence the meaning of new words. Children

can count to ten and beyond and are able to read ingredients when using a recipe book in their play activities. They are becoming confident and independent in choosing activities.

Across the primary classes, children are able to broaden their learning and achievements through a range of out-of-class sporting and cultural activities. They are developing citizenship skills and a sense of responsibility by serving on various school committees and helping to monitor the quality of the school environment. Children in P7 work with buddies in P1 to explore Scots language and learn Doric words through poetry. Most children are making good progress in their reading and writing. Staff are successfully fostering a love of reading in children. Most children can read fluently. Staff need to provide opportunities for children to write more frequently and to develop their talking and listening skills. The quality of the presentation of children's writing varies across the stages. Children are making good progress in mathematics. Most work well with numbers, both orally and in their written work. They are good at transferring mathematical skills and explaining the strategies they use to work out answers. Children in P7 have been involved in research in the local supermarket which has helped to develop their numeracy skills in a practical way. Across the school, children have regular opportunities to work together in groups and learn from each other. They are developing a very good understanding of how to live healthily.

### **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

Children in the nursery benefit from a very well planned curriculum which ensures breadth and progression. They are developing their investigative skills and understanding of the natural environment. Children experience daily opportunities for good quality activity in the outdoors. In the primary classes, children experience a broad curriculum. The staff provide good quality experiences in physical activity and they are working towards providing two hours of good quality physical education per week. Staff across the school are working well together to take forward the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are enthusiastically developing learning across

various subject areas. In the best practice this is making learning more meaningful and enjoyable for the children. Enterprise projects are successfully developing children's numeracy and organisational skills, with children leading and developing business plans. In some classes, project work does not always build on children's prior learning. The school recognises the need to develop a whole school approach to planning for progression in children's learning.

Staff in the nursery meet children's needs very well. They are caring and supportive towards children and their families. Staff know individual children well and are good at adapting activities to meet their individual needs. At the primary stages, staff provide well overall for children's learning needs. In the best lessons teachers use questioning very effectively to extend and challenge children's thinking. However, across the school teachers do not consistently share the purposes of lessons effectively. In a few classes, teachers give children very useful feedback to help them improve. In most classes children's personal learning logs are being used well to help children reflect on their knowledge and skills. These now need to be further developed to help children plan their next steps in learning and to help them achieve their full potential in all areas of the curriculum. Children at all stages could be making faster progress in their learning. Across the school children with additional support needs are making good progress in their learning. Support for learning staff are skilled at identifying children's learning needs and work closely with them to set targets and discuss their progress. Teachers and support staff now need to work together more closely to develop tasks and activities which challenge all children appropriately.

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

Nursery staff have developed very good links with local playgroups and nurseries to support children as they enter the school nursery. Nursery and primary staff work well together to help ensure that children are confident when moving into P1, and experience continuity

in their learning. Staff across the school have formed effective partnerships with a range of organisations, including psychological services, social services and the police. The school has also made very strong links with local businesses, the countryside ranger and sports clubs to enrich children's learning. The active schools coordinator has worked closely with the school and local clubs to encourage pupils to get involved in a wide range of activities. The school communicates well with parents through newsletters, parent meetings, the school website and informative progress reports. Parent volunteers run sports clubs and help out during the school day. The active Parent Council is involved in fundraising and environmental projects. The school is working well with staff at Westhill Academy to prepare children to make the move from primary to secondary. This involves some of the children in P7 working on a joint science project. Staff take effective steps to treat all children equally and fairly. The school has effective arrangements to gather parents' views and to deal with complaints.

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

Children play a very active role in improving the school community. Their views are sought and acted upon through the pupil council and eco and health committees. Staff readily give of their time to run clubs and events to extend children's experiences. The views of teachers, staff and children are regularly sought and used to help improve the school. Staff are very committed and enthusiastic about taking forward aspects of the school improvement plan and national initiatives. They have been involved in identifying the school's strengths and aspects of development and in leading working groups. Staff reflect on their practice and have frequent discussions with the headteacher about individual children's progress. The headteacher has introduced a new approach to monitoring teaching and learning which is building on existing practice. Along with her senior managers, she now needs to ensure that these approaches are fully embedded and impact positively on children's learning and progress.

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

The school is welcoming and children have very good relationships with their teachers. Almost all children behave well and are supportive of each other. Children's achievements are displayed and celebrated throughout the school and in newsletters, the local press and at assembly. The local chaplaincy team contributes to religious observance through school assemblies. Staff have formed links with other schools, at home and abroad. They should continue to develop children's understanding of other cultures and widen children's knowledge of other religions. Staff provide a very high level of care for children. Children feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they are worried about something. The school follows appropriate child protection procedures.

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

The headteacher has involved all stakeholders in developing shared vision, values and aims, which positively underpin the working life of the school. She has motivated and inspired staff to take forward the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. She has encouraged leadership across the school. She now needs to ensure that all staff have clear guidance and understanding on the development of the curriculum. The depute headteachers have improved transition arrangements and opportunities for active learning. Staff work very well as a team and have willingly taken on additional leadership responsibilities to improve the school. Children are actively involved in making decisions and leading committees and projects. There is a wide range of exciting and new developments across the school which need time to show impact on improved outcomes for learners.

## 9. What happens next?

As a result of the good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits following 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 take forward the national initiative *Curriculum for Excellence* while ensuring progression in the development of skills for all children.
- Continue to build on self-evaluation to ensure consistently good practice in learning and teaching across the school and to further raise attainment.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements or recommendations. There are no recommendations or requirements as a result of this inspection.

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 Elrick School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

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

**HM Inspector:** Laura J S Welford  
17 March 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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