



**Strichen School
and Nursery Class
Fraserburgh
Aberdeenshire Council
19 January 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their school² provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which children are involved. We also gather the views of children, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well children are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its 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 from children, parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

² The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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1. The school

Strichen School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Strichen and surrounding area. The roll was 146, including 20 in the nursery class, when the inspection was carried out in November 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Well-behaved, polite and courteous children.
- The commitment of the headteacher and staff to developing children's wider achievements.
- The positive ethos of the school.
- Children's motivating learning experiences in German and in information and communications technology (ICT).

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most children feel safe, happy and respected in school. In the nursery class, children are happy, confident and engaged in learning. They enjoy learning through playing in the 'Secret Garden', using technology and imaginative play. Children are friendly and interact well with one another. In the primary classes, children are beginning to work in a more active way and are very confident in the use of ICT. Children are motivated and engage enthusiastically in tasks set by their teachers. They mostly work very well on activities without close supervision from an adult. Children respond well to good opportunities to work with one another. They contribute confidently to discussions and work well with each other during group tasks. However, this is not consistent enough across all classes.

In the nursery class, children are beginning to be aware of their achievements through identifying and celebrating success daily. Most are developing their creative skills through drawing and painting. They are developing well their understanding of floating and sinking. Children at the primary stages have interests which are developed

through the after-school clubs including sports and art. A few children benefit from musical instrument tuition. They are gaining responsibility and increasing their active citizenship skills, for example through their charity work. Children are learning how to keep safe and healthy through activities including a 'health' week. Children are developing enterprise skills through a range of initiatives and projects including, for example, setting up an Egyptian museum in the P4 classroom. At P6 and P7, children are making good progress in learning German and are enthusiastic when talking in German with each other. Children benefit from regular opportunities to achieve success in and out of school, for example in the inter-school sporting festivals. They enjoy working as helpers and serving on school committees such as the eco committee and the pupil council.

In the nursery class, most children can recognise their written name, for example, when finding a label for their art work. Most children listen well during story times and enjoy revisiting and retelling a story. In early mathematics, they can use words to describe measurement, size and shape when playing sorting and matching games. Most children are making good progress in recognising and counting numbers to five and a few to ten and beyond. At the primary stages, levels of attainment have fluctuated in recent years. The majority of children achieve national levels of attainment in mathematics and writing and most children achieve national levels in reading. Children with additional support needs are making satisfactory progress in their learning. At P2, most children achieve levels early but this success is not built on well enough as children move through the school. A few children across the school are capable of achieving higher standards. Children are making good progress in listening and talking across the school. Most children listen well to each other and share their views confidently. The majority speak enthusiastically about books they have enjoyed reading. However, they are not confident in discussing how authors use language to create an effect. Children write for a variety of purposes and audiences. They now need to improve their ability to write at length. In mathematics, most children are accurate when making written calculations and can interpret information confidently from a wide range of graphs and charts. They need to

continue to develop their skills in problem solving and mental mathematics.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff plan a broad, stimulating curriculum based on learning through play. The curriculum provides good opportunities for children's choice within themes and activities. Children develop well their physical skills outdoors. Staff are aware of the need to build on the range of activities provided outdoors for children's play. They make good use of the local community to stimulate children's interest. At the primary stages, staff plan a broad and balanced curriculum. They have made an early start in developing aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They should now develop this at a faster pace. Staff are beginning to plan topics which help make learning more relevant and enjoyable for all children. Enterprise activities and partnerships with local employers are helping to develop children's understanding of the world of work. Visitors to the school motivate children well. For example, the health promotion caravan and a local farmer and fisherman visited classes as part of their topics. There is scope for staff to be more creative in their use of resources for teaching mathematics and English language. Children's understanding of health issues is increased through the personal and social development programme. The school is working towards providing two hours each week of high-quality physical education. Children's experiences in science are not planned well enough to ensure that they can build on previous learning.

Nursery staff respond sensitively to children and help them when they need support and encouragement. They have clear arrangements in place to identify children's learning needs and share learning goals with parents. They observe and record children's learning during play. They now need to use this information more fully in planning next steps in learning. In the primary classes, most teachers plan lessons well to take account of the different ages and abilities of children in their class. Tasks and activities are suitable for most children. Teachers identify effectively those children who need extra help with

their learning. Classroom assistants provide good support for individual children. The support for learning teacher provides support for children but this now needs to take place more often in class. The school's use of individual educational plans (IEPs) to support children with additional support needs requires to be developed further to enable staff to track progress in learning more effectively. In most classes, teachers give helpful explanations and use questioning appropriately to find out what children know. Homework is regular but not varied enough in a few classes.

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

The school enjoys very close partnerships with parents. In the nursery and primary classes, staff work well with parents and other agencies to ensure that children make progress in their learning. For example, social work, the speech and language therapist and the educational psychologist help support children's learning. A number of parents come into classes regularly to assist staff. The school communicates well with parents through annual parent reports, the school web page, helpful school 'blogs' and open afternoons. The school has appropriate arrangements for dealing with complaints. Staff consult parents about sensitive health issues. Effective arrangements are in place for children moving from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Mintlaw Academy.

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

Children have several opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. Those in the nursery class help to maintain the 'Secret Garden'. The school has successfully achieved a bronze award from Eco-Schools Scotland for its work on sustaining and improving the environment. Older children take responsibility, for example, as 'buddies' to help younger children. Children in some classes would

benefit from more opportunities to be involved in making decisions about their learning. Staff are engaged in identifying areas for improvement. They now need to focus more closely on tracking children's progress and improving attainment. The improvement plan does not focus enough on improving the quality of children's learning and attainment.

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

Strichen School is very welcoming and provides a high standard of care. Staff and children are very proud of their school. Staff have high expectations of children's attendance and behaviour. They need now to have higher expectations of what children can achieve. Children's wider achievements are recognised through 'blogs', corridor displays and assemblies. All members of staff have very positive relationships with the children. They are knowledgeable about the child protection procedures used in the school. They show care and concern for children's wellbeing and deal effectively with any incidents which require adult support. Staff promote equality and fairness through their work on children's charities. Children have regular opportunities to take part in religious observance.

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

The headteacher knows the school well and shows a strong commitment to children, parents and staff. He has successfully developed good teamwork across the school and the school has a positive ethos. The headteacher is well aware of areas of strength and now needs to focus more on making learning and teaching consistently effective to raise attainment. The headteacher and staff need to work together to improve how they evaluate the work of the school and track children's attainment more effectively.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, 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 in connection with 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.

- Increase the pace of development of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Raise attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Improve approaches to self-evaluation, including monitoring and tracking all children's progress.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements and one recommendation. This has been overtaken by the nursery.

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 Strichen School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Sadie Cushley
19 January 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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Text phone users can contact us on 01506 600 236. This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as the line will not connect you to a member of staff.

You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

Where the school has a nursery class, you can contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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