



**Braemar School
and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council
20 January 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

Braemar School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves Braemar village and the surrounding area. The inspection was carried out in November 2008 at which time the roll was 46, including 11 in the nursery. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average in 2006/07.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The commitment of the headteacher and staff to provide meaningful and active learning opportunities across the school.
- Effective partnerships with parents and local community.
- Use of the outdoors and local environment to enrich children's learning.
- The school's commitment to ensuring that children are cared for, valued and included in all aspects of school life.

3. Example of good practice

- Children's involvement in school committees.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the nursery class, children are making satisfactory progress in developing their early number and language skills. Most children communicate well with each other and with staff and listen attentively at story time. Their early writing skills are not well developed. Some children are able to identify numbers up to ten and recognise simple shapes and colours. They need more practice in sorting, matching and grouping things. Children are improving their knowledge of the world around them through interesting visits to the village. Most play well together, share resources and take turns. They are becoming

confident and independent in choosing activities. They can prepare a healthy snack using fruit and vegetables.

Across the primary stages, most children are making good progress in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. Over the last few years the school has maintained appropriate levels of attainment. Most children read well and listen attentively in class discussions. The standard of children's writing in English language and in other areas of the curriculum needs to be improved. The school needs to increase the pace of learning, especially in early and middle stages for a few children who are making slow progress. Most children are confident in finding mathematical solutions and work well with numbers both orally and in their written work. Children are developing a very good understanding of how to live healthily. For example, the school involves children well in developing its healthy tuck shop. Across the school, children are improving their knowledge of the world through study of a range of interesting topics, for example investigating their rich local environment. Children could talk confidently about their learning. Across the school, they achieve in a range of ways in a wide variety of activities such as community and cultural events. They are enthusiastic and proud of their achievements which are shared at school assemblies. Children with additional support needs are making appropriate progress in all aspects of their learning.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children in the nursery and primary classes experience a broad curriculum. The school is beginning to develop aspects of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. This work is helping to improve children's classroom experiences by providing more meaningful learning. In the nursery class, children benefit from good opportunities to learn about the natural environment through stimulating woodland walks. They are developing their own wildlife garden. Children need more opportunities to be creative and take part in energetic play in the outdoor play area. In the nursery and early stages children require to have opportunities to develop their learning through purposeful play. In the primary classes, staff create good opportunities for children to

use their language and mathematics skills in the whole-school approach to healthy lifestyles. This good practice could be further developed. Children are using computers to improve their learning, however further development of information and communications technology across the curriculum is required. The school has increased children's enjoyment in the curriculum through establishing incentives such as the successful annual Reading Month. A range of visitors to the school and regular outings help to extend children's learning. The school with support from the visiting specialist has successfully provided children with two hours of physical education each week. This is further enhanced by the Active Sports Coordinator. Visiting specialist teachers are also helping children to develop their skills in music and drama. Personal learning plans have been introduced for all children allowing them to become more involved in their own progress and individual targets. The school is aware of the need to monitor and review individualised education plans for children with additional support needs more regularly.

Staff in the nursery are caring and supportive towards children and their families. They know individual children well and keep parents informed about their progress. They provide particularly good support for children's personal, social and emotional needs. Staff are beginning to take more account of the children's interests when planning activities. In the primary classes, teachers plan tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for most children. They give clear explanations and use appropriate questions to check children's understanding. They share the purpose of lessons with children and use good strategies at the end of lessons to review what had been learned. Children are beginning to take some responsibility for their learning by discussing with their teachers what they need to learn next. Staff recognise the need to continue to meet children's learning needs through more independent learning. Across the nursery and some primary classes, a few higher achieving children are not always challenged enough in their learning. Closer links could be made between the nursery and infant stages in the development of purposeful play and early literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers set

regular homework tasks at all stages across the school. These tasks and activities could be more varied.

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

Staff have formed very effective partnerships with a range of organisations, including psychological services, health agencies and social work. These partnerships have been successful in supporting children with a range of difficulties allowing them to make good progress in their learning. A very experienced support for learning teacher provides good support for children with additional support needs. The school has made strong links with environmental, church and community groups to enrich and support learning. Staff keep parents informed about children's learning experiences in school. Individual targets are set and shared with home. Staff prepare children very well for their move from P7 to Aboyne Academy. This helps them to develop as confident individuals. Staff take very effective steps to treat all children equally and fairly.

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

Children successfully take on a range of responsibilities and play an active part in school improvement through the pupil council. The pupil council has been involved in organising games sessions for the elderly. Children are learning to become responsible citizens by, for example, being involved in setting up an Eco School committee. The school has gained an Eco Schools Scotland award at silver level, and is actively involved in moving to be a commended Health Promoting School. Children's personal and social skills are developing very effectively through school committees and enterprises. The successful committee afternoons are giving children the chance to influence health promotion, personal safety and re-cycling. Children are happy with how the school deals with their concerns. The headteacher

encourages staff to work together and support developments. All staff work hard to improve the school. The headteacher and staff consider and make use of the views of parents and children before making improvements. They are developing effective working partnerships with parents. Parents feel that recent improvements to communication such as newsletters and personal learning plans have helped to keep them better informed about children's learning. Staff now need to be much more involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own practice.

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

Children are very proud of their school and together with staff, welcome visitors. Children are very kind and considerate, helping and supporting each other in class and in the playground. They behave very well. They recognise that the school is helping them to develop appropriate attitudes and behaviour both in and out of school. Staff have appropriate expectations of children but could encourage higher achieving children to be more independent in their learning. All staff enjoy good relationships with children and make good use of the school awards system. Most children have a very positive attitude towards school and towards their own achievement. Their wider achievements, including those which take place out of school, are celebrated in school. Staff celebrate successes in class, at assemblies and through local newspapers. They make good use of displays to share children's work. All staff are regularly updated on the school's child protection arrangements. They know what to do to keep children safe and well. The school is highly committed to children's wellbeing. Children are pleased that staff listen to them and take account of their opinions. The school takes appropriate steps when children are absent from school without explanation. Regular religious observance takes place in class topics and at weekly assemblies.

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

In her time in post the headteacher had clearly identified areas in which the school could improve children's learning. She has provided a strong lead in curriculum development and improving the school. She has given staff the chance to be actively involved in improving the school. Staff have been involved in some recent successful developments. Further work is needed to involve all staff more fully in evaluating school improvement and classroom practice. Priorities identified in the nursery improvement plan have had limited impact on meeting the needs of all children in the nursery. Given the leadership of the headteacher and the support of all staff, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

9. 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.

- Provision of a whole-school approach to self-evaluation.
- Development of purposeful play in the nursery and early stages.
- More independent learning opportunities to provide greater choice and challenge.
- Further development of information and communications technology across the curriculum.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements. Four recommendations were made, four 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 Braemar School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

Managing Inspector: Ishbel Kerr
20 January 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