



**Cultercullen School
Udny
Aberdeenshire Council
21 April 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

Cultercullen School is a non-denominational school. It serves the villages of Cultercullen and Udney Station and the surrounding area. The roll was 53 when the inspection was carried out in February 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2006/2007.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Happy, confident and motivated children who participate very well in learning.
- The wide range of stimulating learning experiences which develop children's skills and confidence.
- The leadership of the headteacher and commitment and teamwork of staff to improving learning experiences for children.
- Effective partnership working with parents, local businesses, the community and other services to meet the needs of children.

3. Examples of good practice

- Developing children's involvement in decision making and leadership for learning.
- Developing physical activity for the whole school community of children, staff and parents.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are enthusiastic learners who are keen to share their successes. They are aware of the progress they are making. They set learning targets with their teachers and discuss their progress regularly. They frequently share their work with each other and

discuss how to improve their work, for example, their writing. Children at all stages are becoming more independent and confident by engaging in learning activities which challenge them to think for themselves. They are developing a good understanding of how to keep healthy and well. Children in P5 and P6 have been successful in a local engineering competition. Across the school, children achieve well in art and music. All children are developing their physical skills through effective physical education programmes and after-school clubs in netball and football. They are developing a very good understanding of themselves and others through well-planned opportunities for personal and social education. Across the school almost all children are achieving well in English language and most achieve well in writing. Some children could develop their skills in literacy further and achieve more at an earlier stage. At all stages, children listen well to their teachers and each other. They are developing confidence in speaking to their class groups and in taking part in discussions. Children in P1 have made a good start in literacy. Children use their reading skills effectively to find out information for topics they are studying. Some children would benefit from more challenging and varied reading activities. Children are responding very well to new approaches and higher expectations in their writing. As a result the standard of writing is improving. Across the school almost all children achieve well in mathematics. They are confident in a range of skills. They enjoy learning mathematics through practical problem solving activities. A few children are capable of achieving higher standards.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff are adapting their teaching approaches and their organisation of learning in line with the national initiative *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children benefit from broad and interesting experiences which help them develop a range of skills and positive attitudes to learning. Teachers plan activities well, and ensure children are actively involved in their learning. Children from P1 to P3 benefit from play activities which develop their language well, for example through role play. Visiting specialists in art and design, physical education and music

contribute very well to children's learning. The language programme includes an appropriate focus on the local Doric language and literature. Children have very good opportunities to develop numeracy skills through enterprise activities such as fund raising and running the tuck shop. Teachers respond well to children's interests and use them to guide planning. Children are learning to make links across different areas of learning, for example when they all worked on the theme of "Welcoming the World". Children benefit from activities supported by the community and other partners, for example science workshops, animation workshops, and bird watching.

Staff know children as individuals and plan well to meet their learning needs. They make good use of the different age groupings and abilities within classes to encourage children to work together and support each other's learning. Teachers have recently developed more detailed approaches to monitoring children's progress. This helps children to work at a pace appropriate to their learning needs and quickly identifies any concerns about progress. Teachers explain clearly to children what they are learning and how to succeed. The support for learning teacher and classroom assistant help individuals and groups to make good progress. Varied homework activities support what children are learning in lessons and help them prepare well for the next stage in their learning.

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

Parents and the local community are very supportive of the work of the school. The Parent Council and Parent Interest Committee have supported school initiatives well. They have been actively involved in improving the school environment, particularly the outside play areas. The school's imaginative and well-planned use of an open day has helped parents to understand and support their child's learning. Parents would welcome such opportunities on a more regular basis. School staff have developed effective partnerships with other services which have benefited children. For example, staff have had helpful

advice from the behaviour support teacher and educational psychologist. Individual members of the local community have made a very valuable contribution over the years, sharing their skills and experience with the children.

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

All children from P4 upwards take part in one of four working groups. The work of these groups contributes to improving the school and develops children's responsibility for themselves and others. The groups have successfully organised a number of activities, including a health week, fruit days, a healthy tuck shop and games for the playground. The eco group is making good progress in developing recycling and energy saving practices. Children could now take on further responsibilities in classes, for example in working with teachers to identify topics of interest to study. Staff are very committed to the school and work well as a team to improve children's experiences. They identify carefully strengths and weaknesses across the school and in their own practice. The headteacher regularly discusses the quality of learning, based on observations in classes. She has introduced effective approaches to help teachers to monitor the quality of their own planning and teaching. Teachers are beginning to work more with each other to improve their practice. Staff have identified areas for improvement and have implemented changes which help children learn more effectively.

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

Children and staff are proud of their school and of children's achievements. Staff and children show respect for each other and work well together. Overall, staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and achievements. They should now raise their expectations of what some children could attain in English language and mathematics. Children feel safe and happy in school and are

confident that any worries they have will be addressed. Staff show concern for children and work closely with parents to address any issues. They are trained in keeping children safe, and confident in their roles and responsibilities. Children feel that they are treated fairly in school. They are learning to appreciate differences in individuals and to understand other cultures. Children's successes are celebrated in displays around the school, in assemblies and in newsletters to parents. The school is good at sorting out complaints from parents, children and other members of the community.

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

The headteacher and staff have a clear vision for taking the school forward which is shared with parents and children. Their vision is focused on the quality of children's learning, their achievements and their care and welfare. Staff have worked well together to improve children's experiences and to encourage children to take responsibility for their learning. They are beginning to improve children's attainment in writing. Staff are committed to improvement and take on responsibilities for leading initiatives within the school. They have responded very positively to the challenges of taking forward *Curriculum for Excellence*. They need to continue to focus on ensuring that all children achieve to the best of their ability.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very 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 area for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Continue to monitor children's progress carefully to ensure they all achieve as well as they can.

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 Cultercullen Primary school.

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

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

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Christine Knight
21 April 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