



**Kennethmont School
Huntly
Aberdeenshire Council
23 June 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

Kennethmont School is a non-denominational primary school. It serves the village of Kennethmont and the surrounding area. The roll was 26 when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The commitment of the headteacher and staff to the care and welfare of all children and to improving children's learning.
- Polite, well-mannered and enthusiastic children.
- Whole staff involvement in encouraging children to be active in their learning.
- Support for children experiencing difficulties in their learning.

3. Example of good practice

- Developing the range of sports activities in a small rural school.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most children are keen to take part in learning activities. They work well together in groups on practical tasks. Children are keen to express their views and share ideas. They feel safe, healthy, nurtured, included and respected. They are developing their social and physical skills well through a range of interesting activities organised with other local schools. These include hill walking, rugby and cricket. Children take part enthusiastically in a wide range of sports such as football, swimming, gymnastics and volleyball. Children in P5, P6 and P7 develop their self-confidence and social skills effectively through taking part in popular residential trips. They help younger children

experience success in their learning, for example, by reading together. Children are proud of their personal achievements and celebrate these at assemblies. The school needs to recognise children's wider achievements more. Children in P5 to P7 enjoy learning through practical tasks in science. These include learning about the forces of attraction using magnets and making a boat from different materials to investigate which float and sink. Those in P5 to P7 wrote interesting accounts as part of their World War 2 topic about the evacuation of Dunkirk. Almost all children attain appropriate national levels in reading and mathematics and most do so in writing. In recent years standards of attainment have remained steady. Children are making very good progress from their earlier levels of attainment in reading and good progress in listening, talking, writing and mathematics. In English language, almost all children listen attentively in class discussions and talk confidently about their interests and books they are reading. They read fluently and with good expression. They need to discuss and share their ideas more in groups. Children in P1 to P4 are developing their literacy skills well through their imaginative topic work about pirates and the sea. Children do not always write enough at length for a range of purposes and spelling and punctuation could be better. In mathematics, across the school, almost all children are accurate in mental and written calculations. They can interpret a range of graphs well. Children at the early stages can use a computerised toy to make pathways. Children at the upper stages can identify shapes, draw lines of symmetry and measure angles confidently. They are able to solve mathematical problems but are unsure how to describe the strategies they use.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff provide children with a good curriculum overall. They have made a promising start to developing the curriculum in line with the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. This includes helping children to apply their skills well across the curriculum. Further work is needed to improve children's use of information and communications technology (ICT). The visiting music instructor and staff provide valuable learning opportunities for children. Staff are providing at least two hours of

quality physical education each week for all pupils. Football coaching, which involves all children, is of a particularly high standard. This is developing children's physical and personal and social skills very effectively.

The school meets children's learning needs well. Teachers set tasks and activities at the right level of difficulty for almost all children. The pace of learning is helping children to make good progress. This now needs to be more consistent in classes. Children do not yet have enough opportunity to make enough decisions about their own learning, for example, in reading and writing activities. Teachers share the purpose of lessons with children. As a result, children are becoming clearer about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers and support staff work well with children who require additional help with their learning. They are developing their teaching approaches to make learning more active for children. The arrangements for assessing and supporting children's learning needs are working very effectively. Teachers give children homework which motivates and helps them to learn.

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

The Parent Council supports the school well. It recently organised a successful and well-attended French evening and worked with staff and children to raise school funds. It is keen to develop further links. Staff have effective partnerships with a wide range of external organisations. These include the education authority's psychological and speech and language services. Teachers provide helpful information to parents about children's progress through annual progress reports and meetings. Parents help with outings. They have helped to create a Willow tunnel and den to encourage nature and wildlife. The school deals with complaints promptly. Parents are consulted appropriately about sensitive health issues. However, the school does not communicate well enough with parents about the curriculum. Staff need to find ways to encourage parents to be

actively involved in their children's learning. They prepare children well for their transfer from nursery to primary. Children are particularly well supported for their transfer from P7 to the Gordon Schools. The school has strong links with small rural schools in the Huntly area, for example through joint theatre visits and workshops and team sports.

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

Across the school, children are keen to take responsibilities. With the support of the Parent Council, they are raising funds for a climbing wall. All children are beginning to develop their leadership skills through taking part in the pupil council or action groups. They are learning to make decisions on how they can help to improve the school and the wider community. In class, children are increasingly being given more of a say in how and what they learn. Recently, children in P5 to P7 have been encouraged to give their views about their work and personal targets. Staff work very well together as a team and they are keen to improve the school. They have taken on key areas of responsibility and leadership, for example in learning and teaching, and health and wellbeing. Their work is leading to improvements in children's learning experiences. Staff use information about children's learning to track children's progress effectively. They are involved effectively in evaluating the work of the school and are knowledgeable about national initiatives.

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

Children are proud of their school and, together with staff, welcome visitors. They behave well in classes and around the school. They are confident that the school will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. Children feel safe and valued and know what to do if they have any concerns. Staff have very positive relationships with children. They are committed to the wellbeing and support of all children and have an appropriate awareness of child protection

procedures. All children understand the importance of making healthy choices at snack and lunch times and know ways of staying safe and healthy. Staff have high expectations of what children can attain in their learning and children respond positively to these. The school has effective strategies in place to encourage children to attend school. Staff are successful in promoting equality and fairness, for example through including all children in all school activities. Children's achievements in school are celebrated widely through displays and at assemblies. Children do not have regular opportunities for religious observance with a school chaplain.

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

The atmosphere in the school is very positive. The morale of staff and children is high and they are ready to achieve even more. Under the headteacher's effective leadership, teachers are working together well to develop new learning activities and ways of teaching. As a result, children across the school are benefiting from increasingly valuable learning experiences. Staff and children are strongly committed to making further improvements and respond very positively to the leadership of the headteacher. The school's good self-evaluation has led to steady improvements in standards of attainment and achievement. The headteacher has a clear idea of what he wants the school to be. He now needs to involve children, parents and staff in developing the school's aims and vision to ensure all have a shared understanding of how the school needs to develop and 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.

- Continue to develop children's writing skills.
- Further develop the curriculum to make more use of information and communications technology and to take forward *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Improve communication with parents and involve them more in supporting children's learning.

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 Kennethmont School.

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

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

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: June Graham

23 June 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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