



**New Machar School
and Nursery Class
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

New Machar School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Newmachar and the surrounding area of Aberdeenshire. The roll was 394, including 71 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in May 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Well mannered and enthusiastic children.
- Staff commitment to the care and welfare of all children.
- Approaches to developing responsible citizenship.
- Positive relationships between staff and children in the nursery and primary classes.

3. Examples of good practice

- Successful learning through active mathematics and numeracy.
- Children in P2 planning their own learning in social studies.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery classes are making good progress and becoming independent and creative learners. Almost all children are confident in sharing ideas. They participate enthusiastically in language work involving story, song and rhyme. They are increasing their understanding of number and money through activities at snack time and role-play. Most play well on their own and in groups. Many can concentrate on activities for extended periods of time. In the primary classes, most children are enthusiastic and cooperate well with their teachers. In a few classes, children are involved in setting

their own learning goals but this is not happening consistently for all children. Most children in P4 to P7 are developing their interests and achievements through a wide range of out-of-class learning activities. A significant number of children in P4 and P5 are developing their sporting skills through evening football sessions supported by the school janitor. At P6, all children have recently achieved awards for skiing and cycling proficiency. Children in P4 to P7 produce high quality artwork. They work well in teams on enterprise projects and very successful fundraising events. A large number achieve success through music and sporting activities. Children further increase their confidence through residential excursions in P6 and P7 and regular performances in the local community. Children in P1 to P3 are increasing their confidence through regular baking sessions with a few adult volunteers. Most children consistently attain appropriate national levels of attainment in English language and mathematics. There are recent signs of improvement in mathematics. Children with additional support needs are making appropriate progress. In English language, most children listen attentively to their teachers and talk confidently when sharing their opinions. All children can describe books and stories they have enjoyed reading. They are less confident in discussing the meaning of texts and how authors use language to create an effect. At all stages, children produce interesting pieces of imaginative writing. They are developing their literacy skills through linking their writing to work in information and communications technology (ICT) and environmental studies. In mathematics, most children can do mental and written calculations and problem solving well although standards vary too much at the upper stages. Across the stages, a minority of children lack skills in aspects of measurement.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Children in the nursery experience an appropriate curriculum. Staff have recently been using national advice on *Curriculum for Excellence* to extend children's learning. For example, they have introduced *Talking and Thinking* approaches to build learning around children's interests. Children's learning is further enhanced through visits to local

shops, talking with visitors and going on walks to explore seasonal changes. Children have a number of good opportunities for energetic physical activity. In the primary classes, children experience a broad and balanced curriculum. In line with advice on *Curriculum for Excellence*, most teachers are beginning to help children to link their learning across different areas of the curriculum. In a few classes, staff involve children in planning aspects of their own learning. They help children to increase their understanding of health issues through visits to the Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre and drama lessons. Children do not yet have two hours per week of high quality physical education. Children in P7 enjoy their regular French lessons.

Staff in the nursery know the children very well. They make effective use of a range of appropriate resources to plan learning activities which meet the needs of most individuals and groups. In the primary classes, teachers do not adapt tasks sufficiently to children's varying needs and abilities. The pace of learning is often too slow. Teachers need to give children more responsibility for their learning. Support for learning staff ensure that children with additional learning needs are well supported and make steady progress. The school needs to review its use of individualised education plans to support children's progress. Class teachers, parents and children do not have enough opportunity to contribute to identifying next steps in learning and reviewing progress. Most class teachers use questioning well to check children's understanding and extend their learning. They are not yet consistent enough in giving children feedback on their learning. As a result, most children are not sufficiently aware of how to improve their own work.

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

Staff readily seek advice from outside agencies to support children's learning. Parents of children in the nursery and primary classes actively support children's learning for example, through organising the school libraries and helping to supervise trips. Fundraising by the

active Parent Council has provided a number of interactive whiteboards which enhance children's learning. The majority of parents are positive about the work of the primary school. A few would like more information about their child's progress in the nursery and the primary classes. A significant minority of parents think the school does not take sufficient account of their views. The school provides parents with information regarding sensitive aspects of relationships and health education. There is a detailed log of all complaints and the school responds to each one appropriately. Arrangements for moving from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Dyce Academy ensure that children are well supported at these times.

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

At all stages, including the nursery classes, children are proud of their school and keen to contribute to improvements. They have good ideas but think their teachers could do more to involve them in decisions about improving the school. Children respond enthusiastically to opportunities for leadership. Those in the nursery classes join primary children for concerts and the very successful annual summer fayre. A large number of children at P6 and P7 are 'young leaders' who support younger children well in the playground. Others contribute as junior road safety officers and as pupil council members. A few children, trained as *Glow Bugs*, have been teaching others how to use this new ICT network. Children and staff have achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland silver award. Almost all staff are reflective, take part in training and are seeking to improve their work. At each stage they plan together and support each other well. A few staff lead whole school initiatives. The headteacher and the depute headteacher have recently put in place a range of approaches to monitor the work of the school. They have gathered staff, children and parents views about the school and are at the early stages of planning how best to address the issues raised. These approaches have not yet had time to make an impact on improving children's learning and achievements.

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

Staff and children across the nursery and primary classes work well together. They are mostly proud of their school. Relationships are positive. Staff are well informed about safeguarding procedures and take appropriate steps to ensure children are safe and cared for. Staff expectations of children's behaviour and effort are not always high enough. Across the school, children enjoy exploring new and healthier options during snack and lunchtimes. Staff are continuing to explore ways of further promoting healthy lifestyle choices. Children learn about different religions and cultures in religious and moral education. They are able to discuss equality issues. The school chaplain supports the school in delivering appropriate religious observance.

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

The headteacher is a reflective professional who knows her school well. She is committed to ensuring that all children maximise their potential. Staff, children and parents find her caring and supportive. The depute headteacher provides valuable support to staff in the nursery and lower school. Together, the headteacher and depute headteacher work well and have a clear vision for improving the school. Staff have been improving the curriculum but do not make enough use of assessment to ensure tasks enable children to progress in line with their potential. They would like to be involved more in improvement planning and in developing the school's vision and values. Senior staff should take further steps to involve all staff in these areas of work. Future action should also focus more clearly on raising attainment and ensuring learners' experiences are of a consistently high quality. As a result of the commitment of staff to improvement and the support of parents 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. The District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor the school's progress in self evaluation.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Increase opportunities for children to take responsibility for their learning and for improving their school.
- Continue to strengthen the curriculum in line with the principles set out in *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Build on approaches to self-evaluation to ensure that the headteacher and her staff work together to improve outcomes for children.
- Further improve approaches to involving parents in their children's learning and in improving the school.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements and no recommendations.

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 New Machar School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	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	weak

HM Inspector: Patricia Watson
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