



**Peterhead Central School
and Nursery Class
Aberdeenshire Council
24 November 2009**

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

Peterhead Central School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the town centre of Peterhead. The roll was 221, including 20 children in the nursery, when the inspection was carried out in September 2009. Over the last three years, the number of children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) has increased significantly and is now 38% of the roll. Children's attendance was below the national average in 2007/2008. Some children return to their country of origin for lengthy periods.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The welcoming, friendly atmosphere in the nursery and primary classes.
- Nursery children's experiences when learning outdoors.
- The teamwork of all staff and their success in improving the curriculum to make learning more exciting.
- High quality teaching in the nursery and primary classes.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Almost all children in the nursery class are confident and motivated learners. They make independent use of resources during role-play activities. Most share and take turns. In the nursery and primary classes, most children work well with others during tasks involving working with partners and small groups. They discuss what they know about specific topics. They contribute to the planning of work by identifying what they would like to learn more about. From the early stages onwards, children are developing good skills in assessing their own work and that of others. They set personal targets for improvement and evaluate their progress towards them.

In the nursery, children show a good understanding of different weather conditions. They observe the natural world closely and ask questions to increase their knowledge. Most children persevere to solve problems, for example, when transporting stones through piping during outdoor play. From nursery onwards, children have a good awareness of how the body works and how to keep healthy. Across the school, most children achieve well in sporting and cultural events.

They are developing caring attitudes and a sense of responsibility through their ongoing links with an orphanage in Romania. In P5, children have clear views on fair trade issues.

In the nursery, most children are making good progress. Almost all listen closely to staff and each other. Most are confident when talking about personal experiences. All enjoy looking at books with friends. A few children are beginning to recognise sounds and write their own names. Children are developing effective skills in early mathematics. Most can count to five confidently and some can count beyond ten. Across the primary stages, most children, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress in English language and mathematics. Overall, the majority of children achieve appropriate national levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has improved attainment in reading from a low base. However, attainment in writing and mathematics fluctuates and does not show a clear improvement trend. In English language, almost all children listen well to teachers and others when working in groups. Most make steady progress in developing reading skills. By the middle and upper stages, most are confident when finding information from texts. However, many children do not read regularly for enjoyment. At all stages, the majority write well for a variety of purposes. They use information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to present poems, imaginative stories and research findings. From the early stages onwards, almost all children make independent use of word banks and dictionaries to support spelling. In mathematics, at the early and middle stages, most children are accurate when undertaking oral and written calculations. At the upper stages, they are not sufficiently fast and accurate when working with numbers. Across the school, most children are confident and successful when solving problems.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum in the nursery and primary classes is suitably broad and balanced. Staff have made very good progress in improving children's learning in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. In the nursery and early stages, they provide very good opportunities for

children to learn through well-structured play activities. At all stages, staff take good account of children's interests when planning tasks. The stimulating outdoor area provides good opportunities for children to develop their skills across a number of curricular areas including problem solving, literacy and numeracy. Staff take positive steps to encourage children to be fit and healthy. However, children do not receive two hours of high quality physical education each week. Visiting specialist teachers deliver structured programmes in drama, science and ICT.

In the nursery, staff know children very well. They make careful observations of children and use this information effectively to plan what children will learn next. Children for whom English is an additional language are well supported by staff and a regular parent helper who speaks Polish. In the primary classes, staff are committed to meeting the needs of all learners. Most children make good progress. Class teachers use a wide variety of approaches to motivate and encourage children. They share the purpose of lessons and check children's understanding. Questioning is of a consistently high standard. Occasionally, tasks are too difficult for a few children. Support for learning teachers provide very good support to children and other staff. They work alongside teachers in classes to provide targeted help for individuals and groups. They prepare daily programmes for individuals and provide helpful guidance for support assistants. All staff are sensitive to the social and learning challenges facing new arrivals. A good range of dual language materials is available in the nursery but more are needed in primary classes. Homework is regular but not varied enough.

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

To enhance children's learning, staff have formed successful links with a number of organisations, such as the local football club, an oil company, the lifeboat station and local shops. Newsletters and termly leaflets on class activities provide helpful information on the

curriculum. Annual reports on children's progress are detailed and informative. The school uses translators as required when meeting with parents to discuss individual children. However, the school provides written information only in English. The school does not have a Parent Council. Successful fundraising by the parent teacher association has helped to improve children's access to interactive whiteboards. Parents have worked with staff on health promotion activities. They are informed about sensitive aspects of health education on an annual basis. The school deals promptly with any complaints from parents. The educational psychologist and EAL visiting specialist provide helpful training for staff. The time available to the EAL specialist is limited and teachers are not given enough time to discuss any concerns with him. Very effective arrangements are in place to support children joining nursery and moving from nursery into P1. Staff are working well with neighbouring schools to improve the continuity of children's learning as they progress from P7 to Peterhead Academy.

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

A few children influence aspects of the school community through their roles on the pupil council, the eco group and as junior road safety officers. In the nursery and all primary classes, children help choose areas to be studied. All teaching and support staff are highly committed to school improvement. They focus on developing learning and teaching. They meet regularly to discuss their work and this influences their planning of future lessons. Across the school, staff have been successful in developing the curriculum and making learning more interesting for children. They have begun to visit other classes and schools to build on good practice. Senior managers observe teaching in primary classes and make helpful suggestions to improve children's experiences. Their advice is valued and acted upon by teachers. They should introduce similar approaches in the nursery. Staff do not make enough use of attainment information to ensure that all children progress at a suitable rate. Children and

parents are not involved enough in identifying how to improve the quality of education.

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

The school is very welcoming. Staff have created a learning environment where all children are treated fairly. Children value and respect different cultures. Staff make good use of assemblies, notice boards and certificates to celebrate children's achievements. Staff do not always confirm children's progress through national assessments when they are ready to achieve success. Almost all children respond very well to class teachers' expectations of high standards of behaviour and effort. A few children do not always maintain these standards when working with visiting staff. All staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection. They follow up any unexplained absences promptly. Almost all children feel there is an adult at school they can talk to if they are worried about something.

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

The headteacher and depute headteacher have created a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. The headteacher provides thoughtful leadership. He is a good listener and supportive of children, staff and families. The depute headteacher is responsible for teaching a class. His teaching is a model of good practice. He provides a very effective role model for children and staff. The quality of teaching in the nursery and across the primary stages is high. Staff know that their ideas for improving children's learning are welcome. They are optimistic about meeting the challenge of further change and are well placed to bring about further improvement.

8. 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 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.

- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Make better use of performance information to improve the rate of children's progress.
- Continue to work with parents in order to support children's learning.
- Involve children and parents more fully in discussing how to improve the school.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class two recommendations were made. They have yet to be addressed and are carried forward in this report.

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 Peterhead Central School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

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	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Anne Park
24 November 2009

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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