



**Turriff Academy
Aberdeenshire Council
24 November 2009**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, young people and the local community know whether their school 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 which young people are involved in. We also gather the views of young people, 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 young people 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 young people 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 young people. 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 young people, parents and staff, and details about young people's examination performance. 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 and a report on the learning community surrounding 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.

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. Example of good practice
4. How well do young people learn and achieve?
5. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?
6. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?
7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
9. What happens next?

1. The school

Turriff Academy is a non-denominational rural school which serves the town of Turriff in Aberdeenshire. The roll was 709 when the inspection was carried out in September 2009. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Well-behaved, confident and responsible young people.
- The wide range of young people's experiences.
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance learning, including the use of Glow.
- The role of the headteacher in promoting a positive atmosphere and developing a strong sense of community.

3. Examples of good practice

- Good practice in history to develop learners' experiences.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Young people in the school are confident, friendly and well motivated. They are regularly active and independent in their learning. They often work in small groups, taking turns and respecting the views of others. In almost all classes, they use ICT well to develop their independence in learning. For example, in several departments they undertake research using the Internet to deepen their understanding of their studies. In most classes teachers give young people good feedback on their work, identifying ways of improving it. There is scope to develop this further, sharing with young people what they are going to learn and how they can achieve success. Across the school, staff and young people treat each other with equality, fairness and respect.

Learners feel their contributions to lessons are valued. Most young people have very good opportunities across the school to extend and enhance their learning through out-of-school activities, for example making educational visits in Scotland and abroad.

Young people achieve in a range of ways. For example, the local pipe band took part in a celebration of Scottish music for a group of French exchange youngsters. Learners studying history and geography take part in a range of visits to enhance their learning. Every month, young people act as reporters for the local newspaper, with the help of a principal teacher. By doing this, they celebrate achievement, gain publicity and share their success with the local community. Many young people perform exceptionally well in the wide range of sporting, music and community-based activities offered by the school.

By the end of S2, the majority of young people attain appropriate national standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in writing is improving. Young people speak and listen well in class and in small group activities. At S4, S5 and S6 the performance of young people in national qualifications is broadly around the national average. However, it is below attainment in those schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. The proportion of young people achieving grade A at Higher has increased from above the national average to well above the national average. The school should set clear targets to track and improve the performance of all young people, including those who do not study courses at Higher.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Young people have access to a wide range of courses and activities. The school has links with local primary schools to ensure young people are well supported in their learning as they move from P7 into S1. In S3/S4, young people can choose from an appropriate range of courses, including an innovative course for girls who want to study engineering. The school is working with local community workers and the police to help reduce road accidents involving young people. For example, they can take a course on road safety. Young people have

the opportunity to gain valuable skills for work through courses delivered at Banff and Buchan College, for example, in hairdressing, construction, care and engineering. The school's plans for moving towards *Curriculum for Excellence* are in line with those of Aberdeenshire Council. Planning for the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is well underway, including "spot the maths", which links numeracy skills to real-life situations. Staff have developed aspects of health and wellbeing at all stages. Across the school young people do not receive the required two hours of high quality physical education.

Staff know young people well, care for them and are alert to their needs. Young people are well supported by their guidance teachers. The school shares helpful information about young people with additional support needs with all staff. Across the school, teachers match tasks well to the learning needs of most young people. Systems for effectively supporting learning would benefit from further development. Across the school, young people who are very able would benefit from tasks and activities which are more closely matched to their needs. To help improve learning, the school rewards young people for completing their homework. However, homework is not consistent across the school. Some departments rarely set homework. The school is using Glow, Scotland's national schools' intranet, to enhance young people's learning both in school and at home.

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

Staff work well with local businesses and the community to support young people's learning. For example, they have made links with the local library and museum to support learning in history and English. Parents of all young people are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parents feel that the school is a welcoming place and are confident about contacting staff if issues should arise. The school receives few complaints and staff respond promptly to any

concerns. They are keen to be more fully involved in the life of the school through the Parent Council.

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

The pupil council contributes to school improvement and young people feel they are listened to. Young people accept responsibilities as sports leaders, assist younger learners and take part in the health committee. A majority of the staff are involved in development groups and committees to improve the quality of education. Staff also develop the curriculum in departments. Staff are reflective and want to improve teaching and learning. However, they need to identify clearer and more specific targets for improvement. They should ensure that any action taken makes a positive difference to young people's learning and achievement. Senior managers need to further identify strengths and areas for improvement within departments. Working closely with principal teachers, they should observe teaching and learning more often and set clear targets to ensure improvements are working.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

The headteacher and staff have high expectations of behaviour and attendance to which young people respond well. Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. Young people are polite, well behaved and proud of their school. Young people's successes within and outwith the school are celebrated widely, for example, through awards ceremonies, high quality wall displays around the school and regular local press coverage. Relationships are very good and almost all young people are treated fairly and with respect. The school promotes and celebrates diversity through the work of the Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies department. Young people have sufficient opportunities for religious observance and learn about the major world religions.

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

The headteacher is highly supportive of his staff and young people. He promotes the school well. He has established a strong school community and very effective links with the local community. He ensures that staff focus on enabling young people to achieve across a wide range of activities and contexts. Senior managers, principal teachers and other staff lead developments which link a number of departments. Staff are actively using the opportunities provided within *Curriculum for Excellence* to extend learning and equip their young people for the challenges of the future. They now need to build on their approaches to identifying strengths and developing areas for improvement to ensure that changes made have a real impact on young people's learning.

9. What happens next?

Turriff Academy provides a good quality of education. Therefore, we will make no further visits in connection with 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.

- The school should further develop arrangements for identifying strengths and improving areas for development to ensure high quality outcomes for all young people.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *How good is our school?*. 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 are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Turriff Academy.

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
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	satisfactory

HM Inspector: Aileen Monaghan

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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