



**Cairney School
and Nursery Class
Huntly
Aberdeenshire Council
25 August 2009**

We published a report on Cairney School and Nursery Class in September 2007. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in May 2009. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school¹ provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents². Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

Cairney School and Nursery Class serves the village of Cairnie and the surrounding rural area. There have been changes in teaching staff in the nursery class since the time of the original inspection.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Enthusiastic and well motivated children in the nursery class.
- Children's progress, particularly in English language.
- Approaches to improving children's achievements.
- Arrangements for self-evaluation.
- Good teamwork and the commitment of the headteacher and staff to improving the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Children in the nursery class are now making good progress in their learning. They are more active, make choices and are taking more responsibility for their learning. They interact well with staff in play activities, where they are now developing their early literacy and numeracy skills. At the primary stages, children are now more confident in their learning and know what they need to do to improve. They regularly achieve success in local events and competitions. Staff and children have successfully built on their eco schools work, gaining their bronze Eco-Schools Scotland Award. Children have contributed their views to the development of a new adventure area in the school's garden.

Children's progress in English language and mathematics is continuing to improve. Staff have a better knowledge of children's progress and children now enjoy more challenging work. A few children are now achieving appropriate national levels earlier than would normally be

expected, particularly in reading. Children write well particularly in their topic work. Younger children are benefiting from more active approaches to mathematics.

Across the school staff are beginning to take account of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children's learning is improving in areas such as health and wellbeing, and numeracy. Staff should now work more effectively together to take forward other areas of the curriculum. Children now benefit from increased opportunities to learn from a wider range of visits and visitors.

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

In the nursery class and primary stages, tasks are now more relevant and better matched to the needs of all children. Staff provide parents with helpful progress reports. Review meetings involve parents well in monitoring their children's progress. In the nursery, staff and parents work together well to improve children's learning. Across the school, support for learning staff engage well with children and provide staff with helpful advice. Support plans are relevant and now need to be set out in a consistent format to help monitor children's progress more effectively. Parents are very supportive of the school. The Parent Council is working well with the school to make improvements and are now focussing more on children's learning. The school successfully involves the local community in activities such as concerts and fundraising events.

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

Arrangements for improving the school are now better. Children and parents take a more active role in making decisions to help the school improve. Staff very effectively take children's views into account in improving aspects of the school. Self-evaluation has been significantly

improved. Staff now reflect more on their practice. They share good practice together and with other local schools. The headteacher monitors the work of the nursery and school more thoroughly. Staff now need to focus on the priorities within the improvement plan to improve learning and teaching.

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

Staff have increased their expectations of children's achievements and attainment. They are taking positive steps to ensure children are improving their achievements in English language and mathematics. Children are more involved in tasks which are active and meaningful. The quality of learning and teaching in the nursery has improved considerably. Children are achieving well and are happy with their success. They feel safe and well cared for in school.

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

The school is now making effective progress. The headteacher is highly committed to the school and is improving the quality of experiences offered to the children. She has an effective understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Other staff take on responsibilities which continue to improve experiences for children. With continuing effective support from the education authority, the school has the capacity to improve further.

8. What happens next?

There is evidence of significant improvement since the original inspection. Self-evaluation, which had previously been weak, is now at a satisfactory level or better. Overall, the nursery class and school are performing better and are well placed to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the September 2007 inspection report.

HM Inspector: Elizabeth Paterson

25 August 2009

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