



**Westfield School
Aberdeenshire Council
25 August 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school.¹ 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

Westfield School is a non-denominational school. It serves an area of North Aberdeenshire. The roll was 27 when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. The school provides education for children and young people between seven and 18, who have a range of additional support needs including multiple and complex needs, physical disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. The previous headteacher retired in December 2008, and an acting headteacher was appointed in January 2009. The acting headteacher is also responsible for leading a local primary school as well as Westfield School.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Open and friendly children and young people who support and encourage one another.
- The caring and supportive attitudes of all staff.
- Positive relationships with parents and the local community.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children and young people across the school enjoy and participate in most lessons. They like learning together. They are not yet sufficiently active in learning or working with others. In a few classes, the activities help pupils to learn and develop new skills. The school has achieved a commitment award from the local authority as a Health Promoting School. Children and young people are learning successfully how to stay healthy. Children take part in activities to keep them fit, including the morning 'warm-up', swimming and hydrotherapy sessions. Children are helped to develop a sense of responsibility through a variety of out-of-class experiences. They are developing confidence through running charity events and ordering food in local cafés. Children and young people are learning to care for the environment through recycling and growing vegetables in the school courtyard. However, they need further opportunities to develop independence and take more responsibility for their own learning.

Young people in the senior school are proud of carrying out practical tasks independently, such as shopping and preparing snacks. Almost all have positive experiences in the local community. They benefit from planned placements at the local college and visits to a local primary school, sports and leisure centre, shops and in particular the

Robertson Road adult services café. These experiences are not yet planned in a way which improves their learning. All children and young people are treated with respect and they feel safe, secure and happy in school.

Across primary and secondary stages, a few children and young people are developing early skills in reading and writing. At the senior stages, a few can read well and select and use information from different texts. Across the school, most children and young people are not developing their communication skills well enough. Children at the primary stages can successfully match numbers and sort by colour. At the senior stages, they enjoy mathematics and are progressing well in using and understanding numbers and money. In a few classes, environmental studies topics such as 'gardens' and 'the seashore' stimulate and extend children's knowledge and understanding of the environment. Just under a third of seniors are taking a limited number of National Qualifications units. This year, young people have started to develop skills in independence and awareness through Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff plan activities based on the individual learning needs of children and young people. A few activities take good account of learners' interests and talents. The school does not yet have an effective system for tracking the progress which individuals make across the curriculum. Children and young people have appropriate opportunities to develop enterprise skills, including through making cards and running a tuck shop. Staff involve parents and partner agencies well in preparing young people for leaving school. Staff, including visiting specialist staff, provide enjoyable learning opportunities in the expressive arts. They are at an early stage in providing a curriculum in line with the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Overall, the curriculum does not offer sufficient choice or ensure that learners can develop their skills and understanding progressively. The length of the school week is short for a few young people.

All staff know the children in their classes well. Support staff provide caring and helpful assistance to children. However, at times they direct children and young people too much and do not provide opportunities for them to think for themselves. Staff set targets within individualised educational programmes but most of these targets do not provide sufficient challenge to enable children to achieve their potential. The school has not yet developed appropriate sensory approaches for pupils with more complex needs. Staff are beginning to use information and communications technology (ICT) to develop children's learning and communication.

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

Parents speak highly of the school. A newly formed Parent Council is looking at ways to involve parents more in the life and work of the school. Parents are currently raising funds to buy a school minibus. Most feel that they are well informed about what is going on in school through newsletters and the recent school open day. Home-school diaries provide helpful links with parents about their children's learning. Parents need to be more involved in discussing sensitive health issues about their children. The school deals promptly and effectively with any complaints or concerns from parents. The school has recently established links with a neighbouring primary school and hopes to develop these to provide more opportunities for children to work and play with others of their own age. The school works well with a number of external agencies. This work should be further developed to better meet the therapy and health needs of all young people. There are strong links with Banff and Buchan College, with most pupils securing a college place at the end of their school career.

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

Children and young people are involved in improving the school through eco activities. Seniors support younger children during the morning warm up. The school does not yet formally seek the views of young people on how to improve the school. They would benefit from more opportunities to exercise responsibility, both in their learning and more widely across the school. Staff enjoy working in the school and are beginning to share their practice with each other. However, arrangements for identifying the school's strengths and aspects for development are not effective enough. Staff have identified the need to track and plan children's progress. Overall, improvement planning needs to be strengthened to ensure that children achieve more and that their learning needs are met more effectively.

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

Staff have very positive relationships with children and young people. They provide a very caring environment where almost all children respond and cooperate well with staff. All children and young people are treated with dignity and respect. Staff are clear about their responsibilities for protecting them and ensuring their safety. The school is good at celebrating individual achievements in classrooms and through attractive wall displays. Teachers and support staff praise young people regularly. However, they do not always set high enough expectations for pupils' learning. The school is aware of the need to listen more to the views of children and young people and to develop their understanding of equality and fairness. The school needs to increase opportunities for religious observance.

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

The acting headteacher has gained the trust and support of staff and parents. She has started to improve the school through developing

staff teamwork, working with parents and developing a new shared vision. She has established a positive ethos, based on respect for the individual needs of children and young people. Staff appreciate her willingness to listen and provide much needed direction. The acting headteacher has made a positive start to engaging staff in improving learning and teaching across the school. The school development plan does not identify clearly the priorities for improvement, and has had minimal impact on children and young people. Staff need to take responsibility for leading aspects of learning. Learners also require greater opportunities for leadership roles, especially at the senior stages. In partnership with the education authority, the school needs to develop a clearer sense of direction for the future, which would involve children and young people, parents and staff more fully in the life and work of the school.

8. What happens next?

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the school has made.

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

- Develop leadership skills across the school, and more effective approaches to identifying strengths and aspects for improvement.
- Improve attainment across the school and increase young people's success through National Qualifications.
- Use consistent approaches across the school to develop children and young people's communication skills.
- Further develop learning experiences and the curriculum in line with the national initiative Curriculum for Excellence.
- Develop the professional skills of staff so that they can meet the needs of children and young people across the school more effectively.

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 Westfield School.

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

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

The curriculum	weak
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

HM Inspector: Anna Boni
25 August 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