



**Newtonmore Primary
School and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
9 February 2010**

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

Newtonmore Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Newtonmore. The roll was 80, including 24 in the two Gaelic medium classes, 17 in the English speaking nursery class, and two in the Gaelic medium nursery class when the inspection was carried out in December 2009. Children's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Children's learning experiences and wider achievements.
- Staff teamwork and the very good ethos in the school.
- Progress of children's learning through the medium of Gaelic.
- Confident, well-behaved children who contribute well to their community.
- Success of the headteacher in involving children, staff and parents in improving the school.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, children are confident and active learners. In the nursery classes, children are familiar with daily routines and are becoming increasingly independent and confident in their learning. They are able to make their own choices and are learning to share and cooperate with each other. Children in the Gaelic nursery class are beginning to become involved in planning their learning. In the primary classes, children show very good skills in working on their own and as part of a small group. Children in the Gaelic speaking classes, and in the senior stages of the English speaking classes, work together on tasks, many of which they have designed for themselves. Staff are beginning to provide helpful feedback to children on their work. This helps children to know their own strengths and what they need to do to improve. Children at all stages feel safe, valued and included.

Children in the nursery and primary classes are developing effective citizenship and enterprise skills across a variety of activities. Children are enthusiastic about protecting the environment. They have worked hard with staff, parents and members of the village community to achieve an Eco-schools Scotland green flag. At all primary stages, children use mathematical language and skills very well in a range of real-life contexts. For example, their surveys of local opinion added strength to their appeal for a mobile cinema in the village. Children perform confidently in assemblies, concerts and local events such as the Badenoch and Strathspey music festival. Many enjoy taking part in a wide range of sporting, musical and cultural activities within school and out of school hours. Children from the Gaelic speaking classes play an active part in activities run by Gaelic cultural organisations. Children have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy.

In the nursery class, children are making very good progress in developing skills in early literacy and numeracy. Across the school, children use a range of information and communications technology (ICT) confidently. Several use the webcam effectively to share ideas with children from other local schools. In the primary classes, almost all children achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and most achieve these in writing. Almost all achieve appropriate levels in mathematics. At almost all stages, a significant number of children achieve appropriate levels earlier than might be expected. Across the school, children take an active part in class and group discussions. They can present and defend a point of view very effectively. Almost all children enjoy reading a wide range of books by different authors. At all stages, children write well for a range of purposes across different curricular areas. They take pride in their written work. Children in the Gaelic medium classes are making very good progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Gaelic. In mathematics, children at all stages are learning to handle and display information successfully, often in connection with their topic work. Most can calculate quickly and accurately and have a good understanding of time and money.

Across the school, children are good at solving real life mathematical problems. In the English speaking classes, there is scope for children to use ICT more effectively to develop their skills in mathematics.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery classes, staff are at the early stages of implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff take good account of children's interests in planning activities. In the primary classes, staff have made a very good start to implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. The well-planned curriculum is helping children to develop a wide range of knowledge and skills. Staff are beginning to use the experiences and outcomes from *Curriculum for Excellence* very effectively. Together, they plan relevant and motivating tasks and activities which develop children's skills in literacy and numeracy very well across other areas of their learning. Staff provide children with a good range of interesting and stimulating activities which include learning about enterprise, sustainability and citizenship. Staff place an appropriately strong emphasis on Scottish language and culture. In the English speaking classes, children receive high quality learning experiences in French and Gaelic. The time allocated to learning these languages is not sufficient to enable them to develop their skills, particularly in writing, well enough. Staff take account of children's interests when planning their learning. The school provides children with two hours of high-quality physical education each week and offers additional opportunities to develop skills in a range of sports including swimming and skiing.

In the English speaking nursery class, staff meet children's needs very effectively. They know the children very well and plan a well-judged range of tasks and activities to hold children's interest and generate curiosity. Staff gather helpful information about what children are learning and use it when planning future learning and development. The balance between activities which children choose for themselves and the activities led by adults is appropriate. In the Gaelic speaking nursery class, children need more opportunities to explore and investigate in their play. In the primary classes, staff plan carefully and

reflect regularly on children's progress. They are taking effective steps to make learning more active for children. Homework is regular and often interesting and challenging. It supports children's learning in class. Staff give clear explanations and share the purpose of lessons with children. Almost all are good at explaining what they expect children to learn and many use questioning well to check for understanding. A few tasks are not closely enough matched to children's learning needs. All children who need additional support are well supported and making good progress in their learning. Children benefit from very good help from support staff and voluntary helpers.

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

Staff have developed highly effective partnerships with a range of agencies and individuals, including the community police and local businesses. These help children progress in their learning. The school communicates very effectively with parents through newsletters, parents' evenings and written progress reports. In response to parental requests, the school organised a series of well-attended workshops on aspects of the school's work, including sensitive health issues and the work of visiting teachers. At all stages, staff help parents support their child's learning. The effective Parent Council provides very good support for the school, for example in helping re-establish swimming lessons for children. The school deals appropriately with any parental concerns and complaints. There are well planned arrangements in place to support children moving from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Kingussie High School.

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

At all stages, children are successful in developing their personal and social skills and are gaining confidence in all they do. Older children act as buddies for younger children by helping them and including

them in all aspects of school life. The pupil council, eco-committee members and junior road safety officers make important decisions about what happens in school. This has led to improvements in the playground, and to aspects of learning. Members of the steering group set up to develop the Rights Respecting School initiative are leading learning about children's rights and responsibilities. All support staff play a significant role in the life of the school. Staff are reflective and regularly discuss and share best practice. They should now continue to develop further their approaches to evaluating learning and classroom practice. This would enable them to improve further the learning opportunities they offer children. The headteacher is successful in involving all members of the school community in improving children's experiences. She has introduced a range of strategies to monitor the work of the school. These have improved aspects of children's learning experiences. There is scope to improve further the tracking of children's progress to help staff in setting learning targets.

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

Children are proud to attend Newtonmore Primary School and welcome visitors into their school. Relationships across the school are positive and young people's behaviour is very good. Children are confident that adults will act promptly and effectively if they report a concern. Staff teamwork is very effective and the ethos in the school is outstanding. Across the school, there is a very strong emphasis on respect and care for others. Children consider they are treated fairly. They are clear about what they would do to challenge discrimination or prejudice. All staff are highly committed to the wellbeing of all children. They know what to do to keep children safe. The school takes prompt, appropriate action if children are absent from school without explanation. Children's many achievements are celebrated in high-quality wall displays, through newsletters and at assemblies. The school provides good opportunities for religious observance.

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

All staff share the vision to ensure that every child is included in the work of the school and receives a high quality learning experience. Communication is effective at all levels. Parents are fully supportive of the direction in which the school is moving. In building the school's ethos, the headteacher has gained the respect of staff, children, parents and the wider community. She is supported effectively by the principal teacher, who leads curricular developments very well. With continuing strong leadership, the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, 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 school.

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

- Improve self-evaluation, including tracking of children's progress, to ensure that the learning needs of all children are met.
- Continue to improve learning and teaching approaches in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery classes there were no requirements or 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 Newtonmore Primary School and Nursery Classes.

Primary school

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

Nursery classes

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school and nursery classes.

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Anne McGachey
9 February 2010

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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