



**Gergask Primary School
and Nursery Class
Laggan
The Highland Council
24 August 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.

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

Gergask Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the community of Laggan and the surrounding area. An acting headteacher has been in post since February 2010. The roll was 29, including five children in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in May 2010. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2008/2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Polite, friendly and well behaved children.
- Children's learning in the nursery class and P1-P3 class.
- The care and commitment of the acting headteacher and all staff.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, children cooperate well with staff and are keen to learn. In the nursery class, children play well together, take turns and share materials. They are appropriately aware of the nursery's routines and respond well. Children are developing effective independence skills, including making choices and dressing for outdoor play. In the primary classes, most children are motivated well and respond effectively to teachers and support staff. Children learn through an appropriate range of practical activities and are becoming more confident in thinking for themselves. Children could now take more responsibility for carrying out tasks effectively, to improve their skills in independent learning.

Across the nursery and primary classes, most children are achieving well. In the nursery class, children are developing their balancing and catching skills effectively. They learn about volcanoes through simple science experiments and talk confidently about changes in the weather. There is scope to develop children's skills in investigating and solving problems. In the primary classes, children gain confidence and develop appropriate performance skills through taking part in musical activities and school shows. Children recently achieved success in a range of categories at the Badenoch and Strathspey Music Festival. The school has an Eco-Schools Scotland silver award

as a result of children's awareness of caring for the environment. Children are developing their citizenship skills effectively. They serve on the pupil council and work with members of the local community to raise funds for a range of charities. Children know the benefits of healthy eating and regular physical activity. As a result, the school has Health Promoting School status. Children are developing their knowledge and understanding appropriately through studying a range of topics. At the middle and upper stages, children are responding well in learning about simple electrical circuits and how to classify animals.

In the nursery class, children talk confidently to adults and to each other and express their ideas appropriately. Children recognise their own names in print and their early number skills are developing well. They listen well to stories and discuss aspects of their work with adults. There is scope to develop children's early writing skills. In the primary classes, early stages children are making effective progress in developing their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. There is scope in the middle and upper stages to build more effectively on this good start. In English language, at all stages, most children talk well in groups and the majority listen attentively. Children read with appropriate fluency and expression. Children in the middle and upper stages read for information effectively. Their skills in using the Internet for research are developing well. In the early stages, children are producing a range of effective written accounts and stories. At the middle and upper stages, more needs to be done to improve children's written work. Children at these stages do not yet write at sufficient length for a wide enough range of purposes. Standards of neatness and presentation in their written work are not yet high enough. In mathematics, most children are developing appropriate skills in written calculation. At all stages, children show an appropriate awareness of the properties of a range of shapes. At the middle and upper stages, children's skills in using computers to handle and display information are developing well. Their skills in mental calculation are not yet sufficiently quick and accurate. At all stages, children are developing appropriate skills in problem solving, using an effective range of strategies.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is appropriately broad and includes opportunities for children to use their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of contexts. Staff across the school have made a useful start to improving children's experiences, taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Teachers recognise the need to develop programmes which build more effectively on children's prior learning in areas such as social subjects and science. Teachers plan activities which enable children to make links across their learning, for example in their *Crofting Connections* and *Tropical Rainforest* topics. Children benefit from two hours each week of high-quality physical education in accordance with national guidance. In the early stages, children respond well to appropriate opportunities to learn through play. Children in the middle and upper stages are developing their skills in French. Visiting specialist teachers enhance children's learning experiences in art and design, music and physical education.

Across the school, teachers and support staff give children helpful individual support which assists them in their learning. Staff mostly set tasks and activities at an appropriate level of difficulty for children. At times, the pace of progress in learning is too slow. There is scope to deploy support staff more effectively, to ensure that children with identified needs receive further help. Most children are aware of their strengths and what they need to do to improve their work. Homework is appropriately frequent and varied.

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

There are very effective partnerships with parents and the wider community, which support children's learning well. The acting headteacher works well with the supportive Parent Council. She keeps parents informed appropriately about school events and relevant aspects of children's learning. Parents assist the school in a range of ways, including improving the playing areas, helping on

outing and running a shinty club. Teachers produce helpful and informative annual written reports to parents on children's progress. The acting headteacher consults appropriately about sensitive health issues. She records concerns and complaints effectively and ensures that actions taken are noted appropriately. Children's learning benefits from the school's strong links with the wider community. These include work with the local branch of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and a visit from a local beekeeper. School staff have strong links with staff in other local schools. There are effective procedures to support children entering P1 and children transferring from P7 to Kingussie High School.

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

The acting headteacher and staff are very committed to improving the school. They meet to discuss how to improve aspects of their work. Working together in this way, they have recently identified some appropriate areas for improvement. Teachers track children's progress in reading, writing and mathematics and predict when children will achieve the next stage in their learning. These arrangements are not yet sufficiently systematic and rigorous to ensure that all children make appropriate progress. The school needs to do more to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and to assess children's progress in written work. The school takes account of parents' and children's views through written surveys and the pupil council. There is scope to involve parents and children more in evaluating the school's work and in identifying areas for improvement.

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

All staff treat children fairly and equally and have appropriately high expectations of children's behaviour. Children respond well. Across the school, children are caring, polite and well behaved. Teachers encourage children to achieve their best and celebrate children's

achievements. Staff's expectations of children's progress and standards of work are not always high enough. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are very caring and committed. They provide children with a very supportive environment in which children feel safe and secure. There is an appropriate policy for child protection and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in this area. Children know how to obtain help and support if necessary. Staff prepare children well for life in a multi-ethnic society. The school provides appropriately frequent opportunities for religious observance.

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

The acting headteacher has a clear vision for improving the school. She is taking some early steps to address long standing weaknesses in the school's arrangements for self-evaluation. In her brief time in post, she has developed effectively aspects of the school's work, including the promotion of children's active learning. She is well supported by staff who are responding effectively to her encouragement. With the continuing support of the education authority, the school has the capacity to improve further.

8. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, 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. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in the arrangements for self-evaluation.

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

- Improve attainment in the middle and upper stages in writing and mental calculation.
- Improve the school's arrangements for monitoring the quality of learning, teaching and attainment to ensure that all children make appropriate progress.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there were no requirements and no 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 Gergask Primary School and Nursery Class.

Primary school

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

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	weak

HM Inspector: Robert Barfoot
24 August 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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