



**The Black Isle Education  
Centre  
Fortrose  
The Highland Council  
31 May 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMI<sup>1</sup>) inspects schools in order to let parents<sup>1</sup>, young people and the local community know whether their school<sup>2</sup> 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 young people are involved. 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](http://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 there will also be a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'school' includes the nursery class or classes where appropriate.

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### **1. The centre**

Black Isle Education Centre is a non-denominational centre. It serves the Highland Region. It provides education for young people with additional support needs arising from social, emotional or behavioural factors. The roll was 11 when the inspection was carried out in March 2011. Pupils' attendance was below the national average in 2009/2010. In the past session, attendance has improved significantly.

## **2. Particular strengths of the centre**

- Motivated young people who are enjoying their learning.
- The supportive ethos and positive relationships among staff and young people.
- The quality of learning and teaching across the centre.

## **3. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?**

### **Learning and achievement**

Almost all young people engage well in their learning and are motivated to achieve. They feel safe and happy in the centre and are beginning to develop the skills of working together in groups. They have a say in what they learn and the type of activities they undertake. Young people show respect to staff and respond well to them during lessons and activities. They are beginning to set targets to improve their learning. This needs to be developed further. Young people would benefit from more opportunities to learn independently and to take more responsibility for improving their learning.

Young people are developing sound personal and social skills. They have formed positive relationships with others within the centre. They are gaining confidence, self-esteem and independence through residential trips and the evening and holiday programmes. Young people show care and concern about other people's needs through charity activities, including fundraising for Riders for Health charity in Africa. They are achieving in a number of areas through a range of outdoor learning experiences, such as kayaking and off-road motorcycling.

They demonstrate an understanding of the environment and show skills of cooperation and team work through activities in the grounds development projects. They have achieved an Eco-Schools Scotland bronze award.

The centre does not maintain clear enough records to track young people's progress in learning. Staff are unclear about how well young people are achieving across the different aspects of their learning. Overall, the majority of young people are making steady progress from their previous levels of attainment. At S1 and S2, the majority of young people are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Most young people at S3 to S5 achieve course and unit awards in four subjects at Access 2, Access 3 and Intermediate 1 levels. Most achieved Award Scheme Development and Accreditation awards at bronze level for their personal skills and achievements. Their achievements are limited by the lack of time for planned learning opportunities.

## **Curriculum and meeting learning needs**

Young people benefit from a core programme of English, mathematics, art and design and science. Beyond the school day, care staff and teachers work well together to provide young people with a range of activities that successfully promote young people's wider achievements. The centre has made slow progress in developing the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Staff have started to promote young people's literacy and numeracy skills across other curricular areas. The curriculum does not provide young people with a sufficiently broad education. Young people have too few opportunities to develop their skills in information and communications technology and physical education. Weaknesses in the accommodation limit the curriculum on offer. A few young people have good opportunities to prepare for the world of work. The centre recognises the need to develop this further for all. In developing the curriculum, staff need to take full account of young people's personal interests and abilities to provide them with more relevant and suitably challenging programmes of learning.

Overall, staff provide a range of tasks and activities to promote young people's learning. They have effective approaches to helping young people improve their behaviour. However, young people's specific learning needs are not always well identified. Staff do not always have enough information about individuals to help them fully understand and address their barriers to learning. Young people would benefit from access to a wider range of support from specialist agencies to help them overcome specific barriers to learning.

#### **4. How well do staff work with others to support the learning of children and young people?**

Parents are happy with the centre and they feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Staff involve parents appropriately in meetings to review young people's progress. They have developed positive partnerships with social work and the centre nurse to support young people deal with family issues and health needs. The centre is developing links with staff from Skills Development Scotland to help young people prepare for work. There is significant scope for the centre to establish better links with local businesses to extend young people's opportunities to gain relevant and worthwhile work experience. The centre does not work closely enough with mainstream secondary schools and colleges to support young people's learning.

#### **5. Are staff, children and young people actively involved in improving their centre community?**

Young people have opportunities to give their views about centre life at daily morning meetings. They respond to opportunities to show responsibility by getting involved in the care of the centre buildings and grounds through painting and planting projects. The centre does not systematically gather the views of young people, parents, staff and other establishments and organisations about the quality of education. Individually, class teachers reflect on the success of lessons. The

head of the centre visits classes informally. However, the centre does not have clear and effective arrangements in place to evaluate its work and the impact on young people. The head of centre, working with staff, needs to establish rigorous approaches to gathering information about the quality of the centre's work. They should use the information to bring about improvements to young people's learning and attainment.

## **6. Does the centre have high expectations of all children and young people?**

Young people benefit from very strong and caring relationships with staff. This has led to a calm and purposeful atmosphere across the centre. Staff have high expectation of young people's behaviour and how they relate to others. They now need to have higher expectations of young people's achievements. The centre monitors attendance closely and this has led to significant improvements in young people attending centre regularly. Staff give very good attention to young people's care and welfare. All staff have had appropriate training in child protection procedures and act promptly when they have concerns about young people. Young people's successes, both in and out of school, are celebrated regularly at the morning meetings. Respect for diversity and other cultures is taught through the social education programme.

## **7. Does the centre have a clear sense of direction?**

Staff work well together and regularly discuss how best to address young people's needs. The head of centre has gained the confidence of staff, young people and parents. He is very involved in supporting young people across their learning. However, he needs to provide a clearer direction for the work of the centre to promote consistently high quality learning experiences for all young people.

The centre now needs to work more closely with the education authority and a wider range of partners to bring about positive changes to young people's experiences.

## **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 centre has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the centre 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 centre has made.

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

- Establish a clear plan and increase the pace of implementing Curriculum for Excellence.
- Develop further partnership working with other establishments and agencies to improve the range of support available to young people.
- Put in place rigorous quality assurance arrangements, to monitor and evaluate the quality of the centre's work and the impact on young people.



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 Black Isle Education Centre.

<b>Improvements in performance</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>
<b>Learners' experiences</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Meeting learning needs</b>	<b>good</b>

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the service

<b>The curriculum</b>	<b>weak</b>
<b>Improvement through self-evaluation</b>	<b>weak</b>

**HM Inspector:** Sadie Cushley  
31 May 2011

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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