

**Aberuthven Primary School
Perth & Kinross Council
28 June 2005**

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1. Background

Aberuthven Primary School was inspected in March 2005 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), and a group of parents.

The school serves the village of Aberuthven and the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 28. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was well above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The motivation, confidence and good behaviour of pupils.
- Productive and supportive partnerships with parents, support agencies and the wider community.
- Very strong teamwork amongst staff and the very effective leadership of the headteacher.
- Arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils.
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents and carers were very positive about all aspects of the work of the school. They appreciated the commitment of all staff and the school's involvement with the community. They felt that the headteacher had made a very positive impact upon the school, since her appointment. They thought that all staff showed genuine concern for

their children. Pupils felt safe and well looked after in school. They were proud of their school and particularly enjoyed the responsibilities they had been given as part of the pupil council and the school parliament. All staff enjoyed working in the school and thought that it was well led. They valued the very good team spirit, and most felt that there was effective communication between staff.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The overall structure of the curriculum was good. Teachers provided pupils with well-balanced programmes and made effective use of additional time to support attainment in English language and mathematics. There was scope for increasing the opportunities for pupils to learn through play and for further development of information and communications technology (ICT) skills at P1 to P3. The overall quality of teaching was good. There were several instances of very good teaching, with skilled development of pupils' language at P1 to P3, good questioning of pupils at all stages and very good collaborative work at P4 to P7. Teachers made very good use of whole-class direct teaching approaches, group work and individual work. They gave clear instructions and explanations. Teachers used homework effectively to consolidate what pupils had learned in class.

Staff had worked well together to successfully establish and promote a positive learning environment for pupils. Pupils engaged well in classwork, and were enthusiastic participants. In science, for example, pupils at P4 to P7 worked co-operatively in small groups whilst conducting an investigation about energy. Pupils in P1 to P3 worked well together during art and also during writing lessons. Overall, the pace of pupils' learning was good. However, across all stages, there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan and organise their own learning. At P4 to P7 children set targets for the improvement of their writing and this practice was beginning to help pupils identify ways in which their work could be better.

Pupils' self-esteem and confidence were developing very well through a range of activities. They were involved in decision-making through the pupil council and by using a suggestion box. Class representatives from P3 to P7 met regularly and reported back to the rest of the school at a school parliament event. They had already proposed improvements to lunchtime arrangements which had been implemented by the headteacher and school cook. All pupils participated in a good range of enterprise activities and the school had received a national award for its work in this area. Children at the upper stages held responsibility as 'power rangers' caring for the school environment and involving other pupils in the school's progress towards achieving Eco-School status. Older pupils willingly accepted responsibility for others, for example, by helping to look after younger children at lunchtime.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. Attainment had remained stable for several years but showed some signs of improvement, particularly in writing, in the current session. Most pupils were achieving appropriate

national levels in reading, writing, listening and talking. A majority of pupils attained these levels early. Pupils at the early stages were making good progress in the development of their literacy skills. Pupils read widely for enjoyment and could explain why they liked particular authors. Pupils from P6 to P7 demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of how different writers achieve their effects. Pupils listened very well in class and at assemblies. They spoke confidently and regularly presented their ideas to others in class. At all stages, pupils wrote well for a variety of purposes. More than a few pupils had difficulty in writing creative and imaginative stories. Most pupils presented written work accurately and neatly. At P4 to P7, pupils successfully evaluated and commented on the quality of their own work. Throughout the school, pupils' knowledge about language was good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Pupils' attainment had improved over the past three years. Most pupils were reaching or exceeding appropriate national levels of attainment for their stage. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress towards agreed targets. Almost all pupils performed well in mental and written calculations. Pupils in P1 were developing a good understanding of number, money and measurement. Generally, pupils were able to use and interpret an appropriate range of graphs. At P4 to P7, they could organise and display information collected from surveys, using computer spreadsheets and databases. Across all stages, most pupils were developing appropriate skills in problem-solving and enquiry. Pupils knew a good range of strategies but lacked confidence in choosing the most effective strategy to solve particular problems.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Staff provided very good support for pupils. They knew each pupil individually and were sensitive to their needs and circumstances. Staff were aware of the school's arrangements to ensure the care, welfare and protection of pupils. They successfully promoted positive behaviour in class and in the playground. Pupils were comfortable about approaching any member of staff with any concern and knew that issues they reported would be addressed.

The school's arrangements for supporting pupils' learning were good. Teachers planned carefully taking full account of the range of ability in classes. There was very good support for pupils who were experiencing difficulties in their learning or who had additional support needs. Effective individualised educational programmes had been developed to support a range of needs. The school and education authority had appropriate procedures in place to open and maintain Records of Needs. The class teachers, part-time support for learning teacher, classroom assistant, support for learning assistant and nursery nurse were very well deployed to support a range of individual and group activities. The school had established effective links with a range of support agencies who provided advice and guidance to the school. Speech therapy support and a programme to help pupils with their physical co-ordination were overseen effectively by the support staff in the school.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	Overall, the quality of accommodation was fair. The school was bright and well decorated. Staff had made good use of its limited accommodation. Pupils' work and photographs of their achievements were well displayed around the school and created a stimulating learning environment. The school had a secure entry system. The playground and garden surrounding the school were very well used for play and learning activities. However, the secretary and headteacher shared a very small office and storage space was limited. The school did not have appropriate disabled access or facilities.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	Pupils and staff were very proud of the school. The morale of staff was high and their relationships with pupils were very good. Pupils' behaviour was very good. Staff nominated pupils to receive certificates at weekly assemblies where a broad range of achievements was celebrated. A pupil council met regularly and their views regarding school meals had led to improvements in choices. Pupils were responsible for forming agendas and taking minutes of meetings. Staff had high expectations of pupils' behaviour, courtesy and application to work. Pupils supported a range of charitable organisations. Regular religious observance was well supported by a visiting school chaplain. Staff promoted a good sense of equality and fairness by teaching and example. Staff used events and incidents well to promote a positive and inclusive ethos. The school had developed an effective policy for combating racism. Teaching staff did not provide sufficiently regular planned opportunities for children to learn about other cultures.
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had very good links with parents, carers and the wider community. Communication between school and home was of high quality. Parents received regular newsletters, useful advice on helping with reading and informative documentation relating to future school priorities. Annual reports gave good information about pupils' progress and the steps which they needed to take to improve their learning. Parents of pupils at the upper stages of the school were consulted regarding the teaching of sensitive health issues. The School Board and the PTA were active and supportive. The School Board was

Aspect	Comment
	<p>developing a travel plan to improve arrangements for pupils in the vicinity of the school. The school had developed very effective links with a local residential home for the elderly. A few pupils attended after-school activities at a nearby community school. However, some children were unable to benefit from the good range of clubs available, due to the lack of appropriate transport arrangements.</p>

7. Improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

The headteacher and staff provided pupils with a stimulating and welcoming environment that promoted learning and achievement. Staff knew their pupils very well and showed care and concern for their well being. Attainment in mathematics and writing was good, and attainment in reading was beginning to improve. The quality of teaching was good overall and sometimes very good. The school effectively recorded and predicted pupils' progress in key curriculum areas. Teachers used this information well to plan pupils' work.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. She worked very effectively with the staff and had gained the respect of staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. She had set a clear agenda for improvement. She was open to the views of others and adopted a reflective approach to improving the school. She used her knowledge of pupils as individuals to ensure their needs were well met. Her teaching served as a model of best practice. She was supported by professional and committed staff. Arrangements for self-evaluation were very thorough. The headteacher monitored and discussed teachers' plans and records on a regular basis. She regularly scrutinised the quality of pupils' work to promote consistency and high standards. Staff used a very good system to track pupils' progress and predict when pupils would achieve higher standards in key areas of the curriculum. The headteacher had an extensive knowledge of the strengths of staff based on regular visits to monitor learning and teaching, and she deployed staff well. Oral and written feedback was shared at regular staff evaluation meetings. Staff development opportunities were very well used. The school was very well placed for further improvement and success.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- continue to develop strategies to raise attainment in reading;
- provide further opportunities for independent learning, for example, through play, and extend the good examples of collaborative activities;
- ensure that existing programmes of work provide pupils with regular opportunities to learn about racial and cultural diversity; and
- improve pupils' access to out-of-school learning and sports activities.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report parents and carers will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Peter Carpenter
HM Inspector

28 June 2005

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be very good

- Pastoral care
- Climate and relationships
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community
- Leadership
- Self-evaluation

We judged the following to be good

- Structure of the curriculum
- The teaching process
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Pupils' attainment in English language
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Equality and fairness

We judged the following to be fair

- Accommodation and facilities

We judged the following to be unsatisfactory

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a good reputation in the local community. • Staff made parents welcome in the school. • Teachers in the school set high standards for attainment. • Children were dealt with fairly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents had no significant matters they wished to see improved.
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers knew them well, listened to them and expected them to work hard. • The school helped them to keep safe and healthy. • They enjoyed being at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils had no significant concerns.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff enjoyed working in the school and all thought it was very well led. • Pupils' success was celebrated regularly. • There were regular opportunities to discuss school priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements for staff training and the monitoring of their work.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education & Children's Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Wellgate House (Level 5), The Wellgate, Dundee, DD1 2DB or by telephoning 01382 224155. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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