



**Pitlochry High School
and Nursery Class
Perth & Kinross Council
25 November 2008**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school¹. We describe how children and young people 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 and young people. We also comment on how well staff, children and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report also describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well children and young people 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 and details about young people’s examination performance. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school and a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

¹ The term ‘school’ is used to include the work of the nursery class and primary and secondary departments.

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

Pitlochry High School and Nursery Class is a non-denominational school which serves Pitlochry and the surrounding area. The school provides education for children aged from five to 16 years of age. The inspection was carried out in September 2008 at which time the roll was 409, including 38 children in the nursery, 200 in the primary department and 171 in the secondary department. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in primary and above the national average in secondary in 2006/07.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Confident children who achieve success in a wide range of activities in the school and community.
- Wide-ranging and very productive partnerships between the school and community.
- The range and quality of help given to children with additional support needs.
- The quality of pastoral care provided for all children by the support for pupils team.
- The positive impact of the library staff and youth workers on children's confidence and expectations of what they can achieve.
- Strong commitment across the staff to providing children with rich and varied learning experiences.
- Mutually respectful relationships between staff and children and between the school and its community.
- The impact on children of the school's well-planned promotion of health and wellbeing.
- The headteacher's encouragement and support for children and staff, in helping them to take the lead in projects and improvements.

3. Examples of good practice

- Enterprising partnerships with the local community.
- Active approaches to teaching and learning mathematics.
- School links with the local radio station.
- Developing literacy skills.

4. How well do children and young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the school, children and young people are keen to learn and sometimes go beyond what teachers expect and set for them in lessons.

Children in the nursery class approach their learning with enthusiasm. They are developing confidence and independence and enjoy making choices. Almost all children are able to share and work together in a range of activities. They particularly enjoy learning outdoors and explore and experiment confidently. They are making very good progress in all aspects of their learning, including early literacy and numeracy skills.

In the primary and secondary departments, almost all children told us that they feel safe and well cared for. They think that staff value their contributions in lessons. They do not think that their views on how to make learning better are always used to make improvements. At all primary and secondary stages, they cooperate well with their teachers and with one another. Sometimes, teachers do not make the most of opportunities for children to work and learn together. They respond

very well to activities which challenge their thinking and creativity. These include whole school projects such as Health Week, Money Week and European Languages Day.

Across the school, children are developing very good personal and social skills. Many take on extra responsibilities, for example in the eco group, or as road safety officers, monitors and prefects. Children in P6 and P7 help in the younger classes as reading and computing buddies. Each term, children help to set up, serve at and welcome visitors to the Fair Trade Community Café. Some also provide music there. Children regularly work creatively to raise significant amounts for national and international charities. Many are developing new skills and friendships by taking part in out-of-class clubs and activities. Commendably, one pupil in S4 has developed high levels of confidence and skill through presenting his own show on Heartland Radio.

In primary, most children are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Children are actively involved in using their mathematical skills to solve problems and puzzles and to play challenging games. They showed us how they make helpful connections between areas of their learning. For example, they have created impressive pictures and models linked to work in science and social subjects. At all stages in the primary and secondary, and across areas of their learning, children use computers confidently. They have started to use digital recorders for interviews for articles and radio broadcasts. Children who need extra help with aspects of their learning are making very good progress. By the end of S4, young people perform very well in national examinations. Those following a vocational course in rural skills are enjoying challenging experiences and are making good progress. In S4, some have achieved the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze awards. Most pupils go on to further study at Breadalbane Academy or Perth College, or enter employment.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff provide children with a broad and balanced range of experiences. They ensure children have regular opportunities to learn through play, make choices and continue their learning outdoors. They respond sensitively to children's interests and needs and use the information they gain from observing learning to plan appropriate next steps. Children in the nursery benefit from specialist teaching in art, music and physical education. This develops further in the primary department, to include science and drama.

In the school, children have a wide range of stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences which help them to make progress. At all stages, children benefit from opportunities to be enterprising and to use their knowledge in practical situations. Commendably, staff ensure they have chances to develop and use their literacy and numeracy skills across different areas of their learning. All children are developing healthy lifestyles. They take part in two hours of physical education each week and in a range of sports and physical activities after school. From S3 onwards, young people have a balanced choice of subjects. These include opportunities to study vocational courses through school-college and community partnerships. Help for pupils with additional support needs is arranged sensitively and effectively. The school has developed a wide range of approaches suited to individual needs. This includes the effective use of computers and interactive whiteboards to enliven teaching and support learning. Those who need help with their learning are assisted well by staff, including support for learning assistants, community link workers and other agencies. Staff working in the library provide high quality support for children's literacy skills and personal development.

The school has effective arrangements to support children moving from nursery into P1 and from P7 into S1. Staff work closely with Breadalbane Academy to support young people transferring there at the end of S4.

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

The school has developed very effective partnerships with parents and the local community. These increase the range and quality of learning opportunities open to young people and offer positive work experience placements. The school also benefits from very successful partnership working in its health promotion group. In addition, some young people are evaluating the current health promotion plan. Parents contribute to learning at all stages by talking to children about their work. Children across the school work with members of the community as part of the annual *Pitlochry In Bloom* competition. The school's music ensembles benefit from the opportunities they have to perform in various local venues. Groups of young people have won an award for setting up a website for local businesses and for various eco activities. The school has very effective links with educational and health support services. Youth work staff and the school health worker make a very positive impact on the health and wellbeing of children within the school.

6. Are staff, children and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Children in the nursery class are actively involved in planning their learning experiences. Staff ask their views regularly and use children's ideas to improve the learning environment. This good practice is not yet used in all classes across the school. While children think the school councils are a good way to express their views, they would like the councils to have more influence on school improvement. There is scope for more involvement of pupils in the health promotion group. In recent years, the views of children, parents and staff have helped the school make improvements. For example, surveys led to better reporting on the school's standards and quality and approaches to homework. Senior managers observe lessons, discuss teaching and learning plans with staff and review children's progress and attainment. Staff review aspects of learning and teaching and share good practice. They should now develop more consistent approaches

to tracking children's progress to help them take a stronger role in planning their learning. This will also help ensure that courses and programmes meet the needs of all children appropriately.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all children and young people?

Children and staff have worked together very well to create an atmosphere of mutual respect across the school. Staff know children well as individuals and plan effectively to meet their health, emotional and social needs. The school has suitable arrangements for religious observance. Children behave very well. The school celebrates their successes continually and encourages all children to achieve in a wide range of activities. Where teachers set appropriately high expectations for the amount and quality of work children should produce in lessons, they respond very well. Sometimes children have tasks that are too easy for them to make suitable progress.

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

The headteacher has a clear and well-judged vision for the school, based on providing a high quality of experience for all. She is an effective leader and has realistically high ambitions for children's achievements and attainment. She listens carefully to what staff and pupils have to say. Through discussion, she enables them to improve their ability to lead projects and improvements. Senior managers and principal teachers set a very good example for staff and pupils. They are responding creatively to the challenges of taking the school forward with *Curriculum for Excellence*. Staff have worked well together to develop a climate of shared responsibility for improving the school. The school is well placed to improve aspects of its approaches to self-evaluation and to build on existing good practice.

9. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the school, we will make no further visits following 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 schools.

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

- Continue to share good practice in learning, teaching and meeting needs to help set consistent and appropriately high expectations across the staff.
- Build on existing strengths in self-evaluation by involving children more in monitoring their learning and planning how to improve it.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement, which has been addressed. In addition, one recommendation was made, which has also been addressed.

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 Pitlochry High School and Nursery Class.

School

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

Nursery class

Improvements in performance	very 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 class.

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

HM Inspector: Mary Ritchie
25 November 2008

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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

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