

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
17 FEBRUARY 2010**

**SUBJECT: HMIE SCHOOL INSPECTIONS - PUBLISHED REPORTS
DECEMBER 2009 - JANUARY 2010**

BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Committee to scrutinise and note the most recent reports published following inspections by HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) of schools and nursery classes in Moray:

- i) Inspection of Findochty Primary School and Nursery Class –
Appendices 1 and 1a
- ii) Inspection of St Sylvester's RC Primary School –
Appendices 2 and 2a

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D (1) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to exercising the functions of the Council as Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee scrutinises and notes the contents of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The performance of schools and nursery classes is measured by HM Inspectors using quality indicators, described in their publications, "*How Good Is Our School*" (HGIOS) and "*The Child at The Centre*" (TCATC). All schools in Moray have copies of HGIOS and TCATC and are required to use these in their own self-evaluation and improvement planning. Since August 2008 HM Inspectors have evaluated schools' performance using only 5 key indicators from these sets of quality indicators. A full list of the quality indicators in HGIOS/TCATC is attached to this report as **Appendix 3**.

- 3.2 When HMIE first evaluate a school or nursery class against the quality indicators in HGIOS/TCATC they use 'standardised' language:

Level	Definition	Description
<i>Level 6</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	Provision which is clearly outstanding or sector leading.
<i>Level 5</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	Provision which has major strengths
<i>Level 4</i>	<i>Good</i>	Provision with important strengths that clearly outweigh areas for improvement.
<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	Provision where strengths just outweigh weaknesses.
<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Weak</i>	Provision with important weaknesses
<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	Provision which has major weaknesses and is unsatisfactory.

Words, numbers and proportions are used in a consistent manner throughout HMIE reports:

Almost all=over 90%
Less than half=15-49%

Most=75-90%
Few=up to 15%

Majority=50-74%

- 3.3 Initial inspection reports contain commentary by HMIE on the performance of a school or nursery class at the time of first inspection. Such reports provide a summary of the "Particular Strengths of the School" and agreed areas for improvement.
- 3.4 Reports may also contain "*Examples of Good Practice*". These are aspects of the work of a school or nursery class which are deemed to be of an extremely high quality and therefore are being highlighted for the benefit of others across the country.
- 3.5 Follow-through inspection reports contain a commentary by HMIE of the extent to which the school and any nursery class have continued to improve since the original inspection. Follow-through inspection reports are usually published between one and two years after the initial report.
- 3.6 Copies of all HMIE reports are available in the Members' Library, from the school and online at www.hmie.gov.uk

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

- (i) The report provides Committee with information relevant to Local Priority 5 within the Single Outcome Agreement – Attainment and Achievement (Children and Young People), and
- (ii) within the Service Improvement Plan, Action Area 11 – Curriculum for Excellence.

(b) Policy and Legal

HMIE inspect and report on a sample of Scottish schools every year. Their reports are intended to provide parents, local authorities and Scottish Ministers with information about how well schools and nursery classes are performing against the National Performance Framework.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no immediate Financial, Risks, Staffing, or Property implications arising from this report.

(d) Consultations

Senior Officers within Educational Services, Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant and Alistair Stobie, Principal Solicitor (Litigation and Licensing) have been consulted and are in agreement with the relevant sections of the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 That the Committee scrutinises and notes the contents of this report on the HMIE inspections of Findochty Primary and Nursery and St Sylvester's RC Primary School.

Author of Report: Jim Gibson, Quality Improvement Officer

Background Papers:

Ref: DMD/JR/Reports/Children and Young People's Services
Committee/17 February 2010/HMIE School Inspections -
Published Reports December 2009 - January 2010

APPENDIX 1

HMIE Report on **Findochty Primary School and Nursery Class**
published on 15th December 2009

1. The school

Findochty Primary School is a non-denominational school with a nursery class. It serves the village of Findochty near Buckie, and the surrounding rural area. The roll was 94, including 10 in the nursery when the inspection was carried out in October 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008. The acting headteacher has been in post since August 2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The very effective start made by the current acting headteacher to improving the school.
- The welcoming ethos and positive relationships between staff and most children.
- Staff care for the welfare of children.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children in the nursery class are happy and settled. They play well together and are developing confidently in their learning. Children are learning successfully to share and take turns. They are respectful of staff and each other. They are not yet involved enough in making decisions about their learning. In the primary classes, most children are keen to learn. They work well together and enjoy being active in their learning. They are starting to set themselves targets for their learning and behaviour. In the upper stages, a few children are not sufficiently attentive. The majority are able to talk confidently about their learning but are not clear about how to improve.

In the nursery class, children are making good progress in their development and learning. They are learning successfully to be more independent, for example, in following good hygiene routines. Children express their ideas well using a wide range of art materials. They are developing a sound awareness of the seasons through observing plants and the weather. Children enjoy solving simple problems through their play. Across the primary stages, children are developing strong creative skills through art and music. Those in P3/4 show a good understanding of life in Roman times. In P4/5/6, most children are developing an appropriate understanding of global issues by looking at life in India. They respond well to fundraising activities for charities and enjoy participating in school shows and concerts. Across the stages, the majority of children are developing their personal and social skills well. Children have an appropriate knowledge about eating healthily. They do not take on additional responsibilities, for example, in looking after younger children or in leading eco activities often enough.

Children in the nursery class listen attentively to staff and each other. They speak confidently to adults and engage well in conversations. Almost all children can recognise their own name. Almost all pre-school children can write their names. They do not develop their writing skills across other areas of their learning enough. Most children recognise numbers and are developing confidence in counting. They recognise shapes well and are developing early skills in measuring. At the primary stages, the majority of children attain standards in line with appropriate national levels in listening, talking and reading. Less

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

than half do so in writing and mathematics. There is no evidence of improvement in attainment. The school's assessment of children's attainment at the upper stages is unreliable. Children are not always confident in the national levels awarded to them. Children's progress from their earlier levels of attainment is too slow overall. In English language, the majority of children listen well to their teacher and each other. Across the stages, most children enjoy reading. The majority talk confidently about features of their favourite books. Children in the early and middle stages present their written work carefully. At the upper stages, children do not write carefully enough at length for a variety of purposes. In mathematics, children in the early stages recognise shapes well. Those in P3/4 are making positive progress in mental calculations. In the middle and upper stages, children are not confident or accurate in written and mental calculations. At all stages, children are not yet skilled enough in solving mathematical problems or in using information and communications technology (ICT) to handle data.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

In the nursery class, staff provide children with a broad range of activities and resources. Staff encourage children successfully to make healthy food choices at snack time. Children have good opportunities to play energetically indoors and in the outside area. Staff plan children's learning experiences well and are beginning to take children's views into account. Children do not yet have enough chances to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy across their learning. In the primary classes, staff provide children with a broad curriculum. Visiting staff provide strong support in developing children's skills in art, music and physical education. Staff are beginning to develop a few areas of the curriculum, including mental mathematics, in line with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children do not yet take part in two hours of good quality physical education each week. In several areas such as ICT and French, planning does not yet build well on children's prior learning.

In the nursery class, staff meet children's needs well. They provide a very caring and welcoming environment in which children feel safe and secure. Staff know their children well through careful observations. A few children find activities too easy. In the primary classes, staff provide children with a caring and supportive learning environment. Tasks and activities are often too easy for children and do not encourage sufficient progress from their earlier learning. On occasion work is too demanding for a few children. Support staff are caring and helpful but the school does not use them well enough to support children's learning. Teachers make effective use of praise to motivate children. Most provide clear explanations but do not regularly share the purposes of lessons. Teachers use homework well to support and extend children's learning.

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

Parents provide staff with strong support for children's learning. A few help at school events and contribute to the school's arrangements for religious observance. The Parent Council has been very successful in raising funds to improve equipment in the playground. Almost all parents are happy about the school. Most are satisfied with the school's arrangements for asking their views. The majority feel well informed about their children's progress. They are satisfied that staff deal promptly with any concerns or complaints. Many parents are concerned over the time being taken to appoint a new headteacher. Parents are positive about their recent involvement in helping their children set targets for their own improvement. Staff have recently provided parents with well-received advice on

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

how to help in their children's learning. Parents receive helpful information about the curriculum, including sensitive health education issues. Staff have effective links with agencies, including the home-school link worker. Staff prepare children well for making a confident move from nursery into P1 and from P7 to Buckie High School.

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

Staff make a positive contribution to children's learning. They are beginning to work well together to improve the school. Almost all contribute to after-school activities. A few are now taking responsibility for initiatives, for example, coordinating approaches to developing the curriculum. Staff feel that they now have better opportunities to discuss their views and to help set the school's priorities. They have responded positively to the recent reintroduction of visits made by the headteacher to observe children's learning. They appreciate her helpful comments and advice to improve children's learning. Staff are aware of the need to monitor children's learning and progress more thoroughly to improve the consistency of learning and attainment. The wide range of recent initiatives in self-evaluation, including sharing good practice, has yet to lead to improvements in key areas. Children feel that staff listen to their views. They would like to have more opportunities to take responsibility for improving the school.

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

Staff and children are very welcoming to visitors. Staff have positive relationships with children and high expectations for their behaviour and attendance. Staff expectations for children's progress and learning are not high enough. Children enjoy school and feel very safe and well looked after. Most feel confident that any incidents of bullying would be dealt with effectively by staff. The school encourages children to be safe and healthy, for example, by ensuring regular brushing of teeth. Staff celebrate children's achievements well at assemblies and in displays of their work around the school. Children are developing a good awareness of the beliefs and customs of others. All staff are aware of the school's procedures for child protection.

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

Staff and children have recently reviewed the school's aims and values and shared these with parents. The experienced acting headteacher has led some important improvements during her short time in post. The morale of staff has improved and they now feel well supported and have a clearer sense of direction. They provide a caring ethos. However, too many children, particularly at the upper stages, are underachieving. The school will need continued effective leadership within the school and strong support from the education authority to move forward.

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 school has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the school 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 school has made.

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

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

- Raise children's achievements and attainment in English language and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of children's learning.
- Continue to develop the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence* to meet the needs of all children.
- Strengthen arrangements for monitoring learning and attainment to ensure that all children make appropriate progress.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation made which is being addressed.

Quality Indicator evaluations for Findochty Primary School and Nursery Class

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. Three of the five key indicators feed into the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF). Evaluations of these NPF indicators at satisfactory or better provide for an overall "positive" report.

	Primary School	Nursery Class	
Improvements in performance	Weak	Good	NPF
Learners' experiences	Satisfactory	Good	NPF
Meeting learning needs	Weak	Good	NPF
The curriculum	Satisfactory		
Improvement through self-evaluation	Weak		

APPENDIX 1a**Authority position on HMIE report on Findochty Primary School and Nursery Class**

Overall this is a poor report which identifies significant weaknesses, although there is a clear dichotomy between the Nursery class and the Primary school. While the report identifies a number of strengths, it also identifies a very significant improvement agenda for the school.

At the feedback session inspectors acknowledged the work of officers in supporting the original Acting Head Teacher, appointed following the departure of the substantive Head Teacher. Inspectors also acknowledged the authority's decisive and effective action in later placing an experienced Head Teacher in the school, also in an acting capacity. The recent improvements seen in the school have been recognised by Inspectors as due to the full time presence of this Acting Head Teacher, Mrs Hazel McPherson, and to the ongoing and strong support from the authority.

Mrs McPherson brought effective leadership and experience to the school prior to and during the inspection. Now retired, Mrs McPherson has been replaced by another experienced headteacher, Mrs Jennifer Morison, also in an acting capacity. This long-term temporary arrangement will add to the stability of the school and will ensure that improvements already started will continue.

The school, supported by officers from Educational Development Services, is already developing and implementing an action plan to address the points made by Inspectors. The improvement actions will be monitored closely by the Acting Head Teacher and quality improvement officers to ensure the school is better placed for the return visit of HMIE later in 2010.

APPENDIX 2

HMIE Report on **St Sylvester's RC Primary School**
published on 15th December 2009

1. The school

St Sylvester's RC Primary School is a denominational school. It serves Elgin and surrounding areas. The roll was 184 when the inspection was carried out in October 2009. Children's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The quality of learning throughout the school.
- Enthusiastic, motivated children who achieve very well.
- The success of staff in meeting the needs of children.
- Partnerships with parents and other professionals.
- The involvement of all staff in leadership roles and improving the school.
- The headteacher's clear vision and leadership to improve children's learning experiences.

3. Examples of good practice

- Developing an outdoor play area to meet the needs of all children.
- Children leading learning to develop partnership with parents.
- Improving self-evaluation through coaching.

4. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children at all stages are happy and safe in school. They enjoy learning and work hard on their tasks and activities. They work well independently and together in groups. They particularly enjoy challenges set by their teachers which make them think for themselves. Children can talk about their progress and their strengths as learners. They now need to work with teachers to identify their own next steps in learning. Children are becoming increasingly responsible and all contribute actively to the life of the school and the wider community.

Children achieve well in a wide variety of activities, including through a range of lunch time and after-school activities. Children have a clear understanding of environmental issues and, as a result, the school has achieved a silver Eco-Schools Scotland award. Older children have trained in techniques to resolve conflict and they use these skills effectively in the playground. Children in the choir perform very well and a significant number of children learn to play musical instruments. Commendably, the school monitors children's achievement well. Staff ensure that all children have opportunities to develop confidence and improve their learning skills through out-of-class activities.

APPENDIX 2 (cont.)

Across the primary stages, children's progress in English language is very good and in mathematics progress is good. In recent years, standards of attainment have remained high. Almost all children achieve appropriate national levels of attainment in listening, talking, reading and mathematics. Most achieve these levels in writing. Most achieve these levels earlier than expected in reading and the majority do so in writing. Almost all children talk and express their views with confidence. Children at the early stages are making very good progress in acquiring early literacy skills. At all stages, children enjoy books and can summarise what they have read. They can describe how authors use language to create effects. Children write enthusiastically and at length for a range of purposes. They are developing good skills in punctuation and spelling. At the upper stages, handwriting needs to be improved. Children who are learning English as an additional language are making very good progress. Over the last three years attainment in mathematics has steadily improved. At the early stages, almost all pupils are attaining levels early. Most children undertake number, money and measurement tasks accurately. Children have a secure understanding of the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. The school should continue to develop the use of information and communications technology to support learning in mathematics. Skills in handling information through the creation of spreadsheets, databases and the drawing of graphs are not developed well enough.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff have started to review the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. The school provides a broad curriculum which includes all subject areas. The curriculum is enriched by visiting specialists. Teachers make good use of the local environment and involve visitors to the school to develop pupils' enthusiasm and interest in learning. They now need to help children link their learning across subjects. Children do not yet experience two hours of high-quality physical education weekly. Staff at the early years work very effectively with pre-school centres to ensure children build on what they have learned in their nursery class. Staff have taken positive steps to improve continuity in learning as children move to secondary school. They need to continue to work in partnership with local secondary schools to achieve further improvements.

Across all classes, teachers know children very well and plan activities and tasks to meet their needs. The school meets the needs of a wide range of children very effectively using approaches that ensure all children are included in the life of the school. Staff share with children what they are going to learn, check their progress and give them helpful feedback on their work. Classroom assistants provide valuable support for individuals and groups of children. The support for learning teacher and class teachers plan together successfully to meet children's particular learning needs. The support for learning teacher has drawn up helpful plans to ensure coordination of support to meet children's needs. The pastoral care teacher and support for learning teacher evaluate the impact of strategies to support children. Teachers provide regular and well-planned homework.

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

Staff and parents work very well together to support children's learning. Children at P7 share what they are learning very effectively with parents by taking on the role of teachers and taking their parents through lessons. Parents find open days very helpful. Staff work very effectively with other services to meet children's learning needs. They plan very well together to find solutions to challenges so that children can achieve their best. The school

APPENDIX 2 (cont.)

is very thorough in its investigation of parents' concerns or complaints. Staff work very effectively with the local priests to develop the school as a strong community of faith.

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

Staff are strongly committed to the school. They work successfully together as a team to achieve improvement. They evaluate consistently what they do both in their individual classrooms and as a whole school. The headteacher knows the school very well. She regularly evaluates children's learning experiences and talks to them about their learning. She meets with staff to discuss learning and the progress children are making. Children are actively involved in improving the school. The pupil council gathers the views of all children and takes action which makes the school better. Children and support staff worked very well together to improve the playground.

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

All members of the school community, children, parents and staff, respect each other. Children behave very well and enjoy playing and learning together. Staff provide extra nurturing activities for children who experience difficulties being in school. The school has appropriate opportunities for religious observance. Children develop respect for other cultures and religions through the religious and moral education programme, and through their international links project. The school promotes healthy lifestyles and children can describe what they need to do to stay healthy. All staff understand their responsibilities for protecting children. The provision for meeting children's emotional, physical and social needs is of very high quality.

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

The whole school community, led by the headteacher, has developed a vision for the school based on shared values. The vision and values are embedded in all aspects of life in the school and are demonstrated consistently by staff. The headteacher is very well respected by children, parents and staff. She has inspired staff to work together effectively towards achieving the best for children. The principal teachers and all staff work very effectively as a team to improve the school. Under the headteacher's leadership, and with the strong commitment of staff and parents, the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

9. What happens next?

The inspection team was able to rely on the school's self-evaluation to make its evaluations and the school agreed with these evaluations at an early stage of the inspection. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more. The school provides a very good quality of education. Therefore, 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.

- Continue to improve the curriculum, taking account of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

APPENDIX 2 (cont.)**Quality Indicator evaluations for St Sylvester's RC Primary School**

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. Three of the five key indicators feed into the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF). Evaluations of these NPF indicators at satisfactory or better provide for an overall "positive" report.

	Whole School	
Improvements in performance	Very good	NPF
Learners' experiences	Very good	NPF
Meeting learning needs	Very good	NPF
The curriculum	Good	
Improvement through self-evaluation	Very good	

APPENDIX 2a

Authority position on HMIE report on **St Sylvester's RC Primary School**

This is a very positive report with many strengths of the school identified by Inspectors along with examples of good practice. The improvement agenda invites the school to continue its work on improving the curriculum.

This report reflects the energy and commitment of staff, parents and pupils at St Sylvester's school to take advantage of opportunities provided by the authority to develop and embed very good practices in the school. With authority support the Head Teacher and her staff have been encouraged to implement their ambitious vision for the school and its community.

We are very confident that the school, under the capable leadership of the headteacher, Mrs Christine Jackson, and her staff can continue to provide a very high quality of education.

Inspectors will not return to the school to reinspect. The authority along with the school will keep parents informed about its work and progress.

APPENDIX 3

"How Good is Our School?"/"The Child at the Centre" (HMIE 2007)**THE QUALITY INDICATORS**

In published reports HMIE evaluate a school's performance against some of the Quality Indicators published in *"How Good Is Our School?"/"The Child at The Centre"* marked in the table below with an asterisk*

Key Area	Quality Indicator
Key performance outcomes	<u>1.1*</u> Improvements in performance
	1.2 Fulfilment of statutory duties
Impact on learners	<u>2.1*</u> Learners'/Children's experiences
	2.2 The school's/centre's success in involving parents, carers and families
Impact on Staff	3.1 The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school/centre
Impact on the community	4.1 The school's/centre's success in working with and engaging with the local community
	4.2 The school's/centre's success in working with and engaging with the wider community
Delivery of education	<u>5.1*</u> The curriculum
	5.2 Teaching for effective learning
	<u>5.3*</u> Meeting learning needs
	5.4 Assessment for learning
	5.5 Expectations and promoting achievement
	5.6 Equality and fairness
	5.7 Partnerships with learners/children and parents
	5.8 Care, welfare and development
	<u>5.9*</u> Improvement through self-evaluation
Policy development and planning	6.1 Policy review and development
	6.2 Participation in policy and planning
	6.3 Planning for improvement
Management and support of staff	7.1 Staff sufficiency, recruitment and retention
	7.2 Staff deployment and teamwork
	7.3 Staff development and review
Partnerships and resources	8.1 Partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers
	8.2 Management of finance for learning
	8.3 Management and use of resources and space for learning
	8.4 Managing information
Leadership	9.1 Vision, values and aims
	9.2 Leadership and direction
	9.3 Developing people and partnerships
	9.4 Leadership of improvement and change