



**Forres Academy
The Moray Council
25 August 2009**

This report tells you about the quality of education at the school. We describe how 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 parents¹ and services which support young people. We also comment on how well staff and young people work together and how they go about improving the school.

Our report describes the ‘ethos’ of the school. By ‘ethos’ we mean the relationships in the school, how well 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 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

Forres Academy is a non-denominational school which serves the town of Forres and the surrounding area. The roll was 1002 when the inspection was carried out in June 2009. Young people's attendance was in line with the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Enthusiastic, well motivated and articulate young people.
- Positive relationships between young people and teachers.
- Teaching and learning of high quality.
- Strong partnerships with the local community.
- Innovative curriculum initiatives.
- The commitment of the headteacher, senior leadership team and staff to improving the school.

3. Examples of good practice

- '*Hut 9*': emotional and educational support for young people with additional support needs.
- The reading recovery programme.
- Effective inter-agency working for the benefit of young people.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Young people at all stages benefit from the wide variety of opportunities to extend their learning and achievements. As part of school activities days, they are developing confidence, independence and skills in working with others. Across the school young people willingly share their views and ideas and learn from each other. In almost all lessons, they are increasing their abilities to think critically

and creatively. Young people understand how to stay healthy. Most feel safe and well cared for, and believe that they are treated fairly and with respect.

The wide-ranging programme of clubs enables many young people at all stages to learn more about themselves and to develop new skills and interests. A notable number are becoming better at coping with unfamiliar situations, for example, through residential excursions. Most young people in S6 are developing their leadership skills and contribute well to the school community. The school is planning further work to increase the motivation, confidence and resilience of young people in the senior school. For example, it has given them study mentors to offer support and help them to achieve as well as they can.

Most young people in S1/S2 are making progress from their prior learning, although there is scope to improve how effectively the school tracks their progress from P7 to S2. Most achieve appropriate national levels in reading, talking and listening. The majority achieve these in writing and in mathematics. At S4, examination results are in line with schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. At S5/S6 attainment is improving and results are better than in schools with similar characteristics. There is headroom for the lowest attaining young people in S4 and the highest attainers at all stages to do better in national examinations. Almost all young people presented for vocational awards achieve success. When young people leave school, most go on to university or college, or are successful in getting a job or training opportunity.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is broad and balanced overall. Particular strengths include the high quality of many courses, the imaginative approaches adopted by many teachers and the interesting opportunities for young people to link learning across different subjects. There is clear emphasis on health promotion, enterprise and education for global citizenship. The school's developing links with Malawi are providing a

valuable addition to the curriculum. Suitable links with Moray College have been established through *Skills for Work* courses. The school is planning to extend these and to improve the structure of the S5/S6 curriculum. Not enough young people at these stages have the chance to benefit from the high quality of programmes in religious and moral education and physical education. Arrangements for personal and social education and for study affect the overall balance of the curriculum at these stages. Links with associated primary schools are improving. The school's approaches to encouraging literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing across the curriculum are developing steadily and relate very well to the *Curriculum for Excellence* national initiative.

Across the school, teachers know young people as individuals and adapt their teaching methods well to help them progress in their learning. Many lessons are exceptionally effective in meeting the needs of young people and engaging their interest. The curriculum is adjusted to meet individual needs. In "*Hut 9*" for example, they participate in activities which develop their personal and social skills, boost their self confidence and provide a sense of achievement. Teachers in the support for learning department issue helpful information to help staff meet learners' needs. However, they do not plan, monitor or review the progress of young people with additional support needs effectively enough. At times, learning targets in individual programmes are not sufficiently clear or appropriate. Following a review by the education authority, the school has recognised the need to improve significantly the impact of support for learning on outcomes for all young people.

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

The school plays an important part in the local community. Staff work well with a wide range of other professional agencies to support young people. Young people benefit from strong links with local businesses, the RAF, the Findhorn Foundation, Moray Youth Action and a wide

range of community and sporting organisations. These links help to extend their experience and promote health and wellbeing. Young people are well supported when they move into S1 and teachers are beginning to build more effectively on learning in primary school. Parents, including the Parent Council, provide valuable support for a range of school activities and events. The school has recognised that it needs to improve further its communication with parents, particularly in addressing complaints and concerns.

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

Young people feel their views on some aspects of school life are listened to and acted upon. They have influenced the school's approaches to health promotion and improved dining arrangements. The majority feel that they should be involved more fully in contributing to the life and work of the school. The school has effective and improving arrangements for reviewing the quality of its work, such as analysing examination results and tracking young people's progress. Most departments seek young people's views on the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Staff are fully involved in a range of working groups aimed at school improvement. The headteacher now needs to prioritise areas for improvement to ensure a clearer focus on learning and achievement.

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

The school has a friendly and relaxed ethos. Relationships between teachers and young people are very positive. Young people are well-behaved in class and around the school. Staff and young people share positive expectations of work and behaviour. Catering staff have worked hard to introduce healthy eating options and have been successful in promoting uptake of the good quality school lunches. Most young people feel safe and well cared for and think that staff treat them fairly and with respect. Aspects of security require to be

improved by the school and education authority. The school is accessible to users with restricted mobility. The school holds regular assemblies, but these do not offer sufficient opportunities for religious observance. It is currently reviewing these arrangements along with its approaches to promoting the values of respect, equality and fairness. Overall the school celebrates young people's achievements well. It agrees the need to ensure further recognition of the talents and achievements of all young people.

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

The headteacher has established a clear momentum for change and improvement in his first year in post. He has identified and shared his priorities for improvement. His approachability and commitment have encouraged a high degree of teamwork and commitment on the part of staff. He has been very well supported by a hard-working senior leadership team and by most staff throughout the school. The senior leadership team now needs to reduce its time spent on administrative tasks in order to maintain the progress of curriculum development. The clear emphasis on self-evaluation and innovation leaves the school well placed to improve further.

9. What happens next?

The school's self-evaluation is leading to improvements in young people's learning. As a result, the inspection team was able to change its focus during the inspection to help the school plan to improve even more. HMIE will make no further visits following publication of this report. 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 develop the curriculum to meet young people's needs, particularly at S5/S6.
- Establish more effective arrangements to support the learning of young people with additional support needs.
- Continue to develop arrangements for evaluating and improving the quality of education.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *How good is our school?* 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 are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Forres Academy.

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

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

Managing Inspector: L MacCallum

25 August 2009

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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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